

“The Puppeteer of Your Own Past”  
Marcel Duchamp and the Manipulation of Posterity

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I, Michelle Lee, declare:

- (a) that the thesis has been composed by myself, and
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 18/02/10

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Signed 18 February 2010

# THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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The image of Marcel Duchamp as a brilliant but laconic dilettante has come to dominate the literature surrounding the artist's life and work. His intellect and strategic brilliance were vaunted by his friends and contemporaries, and served as the basis of the mythology that has been coalescing around the artist and his work since before his death in 1968. Though few would challenge these attributions of intelligence, few have likewise considered the role that Duchamp's prodigious mind played in bringing about the present state of his career. Many of the signal features of Duchamp's artistic career: his avoidance of the commercial art market, his cultivation of patrons, his "retirement" from art and the secret creation and posthumous unveiling of his *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau/2° le gaz d'éclairage*, all played key roles in the development of the Duchampian mythos.

Rather than treating Duchamp's current art historical position as the fortuitous result of chance, this thesis attempts to examine the many and subtle ways in which Duchamp worked throughout his life to control how he and his work were and are perceived. Such an examination necessarily begins at the start of his relationship with the general and specialist media, through the auspices of his painting *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*. This is followed by an examination of Duchamp's decades-long relationship with the press through the interviews given during his life.

Duchamp's concern for his physical legacy is explored next, initially through his relationships with his two dominant patrons, Walter and Louise Arensberg and Katherine Dreier. Not only did he act as advisor and dealer in the development of both prestigious collections, Duchamp had the privileged position of participant in the negotiations surrounding the disposition of the collections he had helped to build. Duchamp's concern for the preservation of his physical legacy continued after the installation of his own work within major American museums. Thus, next is considered the development and effects of the two large-scale retrospectives of Duchamp's work held within his lifetime. Finally is considered the role of Duchamp's posthumous work, the *Étant Donnés*. Through the combination of secrecy and strategically revealed hints, Duchamp ensured that his final work would engender discussion long after his death.

This thesis is dedicated with love  
to my father,

Maj. Raymond Thomas Lee, III

who has ceaselessly encouraged  
my academic growth, and without whom  
none of this would have been possible.

## Contents:

List of Images .....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 – The Nude Descending a Staircase.....	9
Chapter 2 – The Silence of Marcel Duchamp is Overrated .....	33
Chapter 3 – The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.....	69
Chapter 4 – Katherine Dreier and the Société Anonyme.....	127
Chapter 5 – Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition .....	186
Chapter 6 – The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp .....	224
Chapter 7 - Étant Donnés: 1° La Chute d'Eau, 2° Le Gaz d'Éclairage.....	253
Conclusion .....	301
Bibliography .....	306
Illustrations .....	352

## List of Images

All works are by Marcel Duchamp unless otherwise noted.

- 1.01 – *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (January 1912); Oil on canvas (57 1/2 x 35 1/16 in.; 146 x 89 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 1.02 – Anonymous, “The Armory Puzzle,”; *American Art News*, 8 March 1913, p. 4.
- 1.03 – Anonymous, “Here She is: White Outline Shows ‘Nude Descending a Staircase.’”; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 March 1913, p. 5.
- 1.04 – *Sad Young Man on a Train* (December 1911); Oil on textured cardboard mounted on board (39 3/8 x 28 3/4 in.; 100 x 73 cm); Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Venice
- 1.05 – *The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes* (May 1912); Oil on canvas (45 1/16 x 50 9/16 in.; 114.5 x 128.5 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 1.06 – *Portrait of Chess Players* (December 1911); Oil on canvas (42 1/2 x 39 3/4 in.; 108 x 101 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 1.07 – J. F. Griswold, *Seeing New York With a Cubist: The Rude Descending a Staircase (Rush Hour at the Subway)*; *Evening Sun*, 20 March 1913
- 1.08 – Anonymous, *Art at the Armory by Powers, Futurist*
- 1.09 – Menu for the *International Exhibition of Modern Art*’s Beefsteak Dinner for the Press Signed by guests at the dinner; Smithsonian Institution, Walt Kuhn Family papers and Armory Show records
- 1.10 – Henry McBride, “The Nude-Descending-a-Staircase Man Surveys Us”; *New York Tribune*, 12 September 1915, section 4, p. 2.
- 1.11 – Articles from *The New York Times* featuring photographs of Marcel Duchamp posed in front of his *Nude Descending a Staircase, no. 2*
- 1.12 – Kenyon Cox, “Cubists and Futurists are Making Insanity Pay”; *The New York Times*, 15 March 1913, p. 5.
- 1.13 – *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 3* (1916); Watercolour, ink, pencil and pastel over photograph (57 5/8 x 35 7/16 in.; 147 x 90 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 1.14 – Preparatory study for *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 3* (1915); Watercolour, pencil and white transparent pastel over photograph; (13 13/16 x 8 1/4 in.; 35.2 x 20.9 cm); Present location unknown
- 1.15 – *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 4* (23 July 1918); Pencil, ink and wash on paper (3 11/16 x 2 3/8 in.; 9.3 x 6.1 cm); Museum of the City of New York
- 1.16a – Pochoir of *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (December 1937); Pochoir reproduction and blue ink over a French 5-centime revenue stamp (13 3/4 x 7 7/8 in.; 35 x 20 cm)
- 1.16b - Pochoir of *Bride* (October 1937); Pochoir reproduction and blue ink over a French 5-centime revenue stamp; (13 5/16 x 7 11/16 in.; 33.8 x 19.5 cm )
- 1.17 – Stills from the dream sequence “Discs” in *Dreams that Money Can Buy*; directed by Hans Richter, 1947
- 1.18 – The final scene in the dream sequence “Discs” in *Dreams that Money Can Buy*; directed by Hans Richter, 1947
- 1.19 – Eliot Elisofon, *Duchamp Descending a Staircase* (1952); Gelatin Silver Print; Time, inc.

- 1.20a – Edward Muybridge, *Woman Walking Down Stairs* (1887); Collotype; from the series *Animal Locomotion*
- 1.20b – Étienne-Jules Marey, *Marche n° 4* (1884); Chronophotograph on a fixed plate negative
- 1.21 – Cover image for the paperback edition of Robert Lebel's *Marcel Duchamp*; Paragraphic Books, 1967
- 1.22 – Shop window installation at Bamberger's Department Store, Newark, New Jersey (January 1960); Grove Press Records, Department of Special Collections, Syracuse University Library
- 1.23 – Poster for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Famous International Armory Show, 1913 (1963); designed by Marcel Duchamp in cooperation with Herbert Matter; (44 x 26 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 111.8 x 67.8 cm)
- 1.24 – Juan Miró, *Untitled (Nude Descending a Staircase)* (4 September 1924); Conté crayon, crayon and graphite pencil on laid paper with a collaged postage stamp; (23 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 18 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 60.17 x 46.51 cm); Private collection
- 1.25 – Salvador Dalí, *Nude Ascending a Staircase, Homage to Duchamp* (1973)
- 1.26 – Hananiah Harari, *Nude Descending a Staircase* (date unknown); (74 x 38 in.; 187.9 x 96.5 cm)
- 1.27 – Gerhard Richter, *Emma (Nude on a Staircase)* (1966); Oil on canvas (78 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 51 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 200 x 130 cm); Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany
- 1.28 – Gilles Aillaud, Eduardo Arroyo & Antonio Recalcati, *Live and Let Die or The Tragic End of Marcel Duchamp* (1965); Oil on canvas (series of 8 tableaux, 66 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 44 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> and 66 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 51 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 162 x 114 cm and 162 x 130 cm); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid
- 2.01 – Stills from James Johnson Sweeney's interview of Marcel Duchamp; Part of the NBC programme, *Conversations with Elder Wise Men*; Recorded summer 1955
- 2.02 – Stills from Joan Bakewell's interview of Marcel Duchamp; For the BBC programme, *Late Night Line Up*; Recorded 5 June 1968
- 2.03 – *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919); Reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* with pencil additions; (7 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 4 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; 19.7 x 12.4 cm); Private collection
- 2.04 – *Coffee Mill* (November - December 1911); Oil on cardboard (13 x 4 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 33 x 12.5 cm); Tate Gallery, London
- 2.05 – *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* (1921); A small bird cage fitted with four wooden bars and filled with 152 marble cubes, a thermometer and a cuttlebone (4 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 8 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 11.4 x 22 x 16 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.01 – Paul Cézanne, *The Bathers (Large Version)* (1896-98); Colour lithograph (6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 20 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; 41 x 52.4 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.02 – Paul Gauguin, *Leda (Projet d'Assiette)* (1889); Zincograph on yellow paper, hand coloured by Gauguin; (11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 30.2 x 25.9 cm); Present location unknown
- 3.03 – Jacques Villon, *Puteaux (Smoke and Trees in Bloom, No. 2)* (1912); Oil on canvas (18 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 21 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.; 46.3 x 55.2 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.04 – *The* (1915); Ink and graphite on paper; (8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 5 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; 22.2 x 14.3 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection

- 3.05 – *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1945; replica of the lost original of 1915); Readymade wood and galvanized iron snow shovel; (Original dimensions lost, replica: 47  $\frac{3}{4}$  in.; 121.3 cm high); Yale University Art Gallery, Collection of the Société Anonyme
- 3.06 – *Bottlerack* (1914); Readymade galvanized iron bottle rack (original lost, dimensions not recorded)
- 3.07 – *Fania (Profile)* (1916); Dark brown ink, black typewriter ink and graphite inscription on light tan wove paper (10  $\frac{15}{16}$  x 8  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.; 27.8 x 21.5 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.08 – *Rendez-vous du Dimanche 6 Février 1916...* (February 1916); Typewritten text with black ink corrections on four post cards taped together; (11  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 5  $\frac{11}{16}$  in.; 28.4 x 14.4 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.09 – *Comb* (February 1916); Readymade steel dog comb inscribed with white paint (6  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  in.; 16.5 x 3.2 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.10 – *With Hidden Noise* (Easter 1916); Ball of twine between two brass plates, joined by four long screws, containing unknown object added by Walter Arensberg (5 x 5 x 5  $\frac{1}{8}$  in.; 12.7 x 12.7 x 13 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.11 – *Fountain* (1917); Porcelain urinal and black paint (original lost, dimensions not recorded); Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz
- 3.12 – *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (the Large Glass)* (1915-1923; broken 1933, repaired 1936); Oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire and dust on two glass panels; (109  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 69  $\frac{1}{4}$  in.; 277.5 x 175.9 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Bequest of Katherine S. Dreier
- 3.13 – *Tu m'* (1918); Oil and pencil on canvas, with bottle brush, three safety pins and a bolt; (27  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 119  $\frac{15}{16}$  in.; 69.8 x 303cm); Yale University Art Gallery, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest
- 3.14 – Constantin Brancusi, *Nouveau Né* (1915); White marble (5  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 8  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 5  $\frac{7}{8}$  in.; 14.6 x 21 x 14.9 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.15 – *50cc of Paris Air* (December 1919); Readymade glass ampoule (broken then later restored), with a printed label reading “*Sérum Physiologique*”; (height: 5  $\frac{1}{4}$  in.; 13.5 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.16 – *Bride* (August 1912); Oil on canvas (35  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 21  $\frac{7}{8}$  in.; 89.5 x 55.6 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.17 – Brancusi display foyer in the Arensbergs’ Hollywood home; date unknown (between 1928 and 1951); Photograph by Beatrice Wood
- 3.18 – *Glider Containing a Water Mill in Neighbouring Metals* (1913 – 1915); Oil and lead wire on glass (59  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 32  $\frac{15}{16}$  in.; 150.8 x 83.7 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.19 – *Portrait of the Artist’s Father* (1910); Oil on canvas (36  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 28  $\frac{7}{8}$  in.; 92.4 x 73.3 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.20 – *The Bush* (December 1910 – January 1911); Oil on canvas (50  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 36  $\frac{3}{16}$  in.; 127.3 x 91.9 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.21 – *Baptism* (1911); Oil on canvas (36 x 25  $\frac{5}{8}$  in.; 91.4 x 65.1 cm); Philadelphia



- Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.22 – *Passage from Virgin to Bride* (July – August 1912); Oil on canvas (23 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 21 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.; 59.4 x 54 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 3.23 – *Virgin, No. 1* (1 July 1912); Pencil on paper (13 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 32.6 x 25.2 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection
- 3.24 – *The Chess Game* (August 1910); Oil on canvas (44 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 57 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 114 x 146.5 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.25 – Gallery Plan of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1959
- 3.26 – *Church at Blainville* (1902); Oil on canvas (24 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 16 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; 61.3 x 42.9 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.27 – *Portrait of Marcel Lefrançois* (1904); Oil on canvas (25 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 23 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 65.1 x 60.8 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.28 – *Portrait of Dr. Dumouchel* (April 1910); Oil on canvas (39 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 25 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; 100.3 x 65.7 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.29 – *Dark Skin* (1910); Watercolour on paper (18 x 18 in.; 45.7 x 45.7 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 3.30 – Marcel Duchamp inspecting the installation of the *Large Glass* in the Arensberg Galleries of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 7 July 1954; Photograph from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 July 1954
- 4.01 – Katherine Sophie Dreier, *The Blue Bowl* (1911); Oil on canvas (31 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 18 in.; 80.01 x 45.72 cm); Yale University Art Gallery
- 4.02 – Vincent van Gogh, *Head and Shoulders of Young Woman* (now called *Adeline Ravoux*) (1890); Oil on canvas (19 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 19 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; 50.2 x 50.5cm); Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Bequest
- 4.03 – *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour* (1918); Oil, silver leaf, lead wire, and magnifying lens on glass (cracked after completion); (20 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 16 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.; 51 x 41.2 x 3.7 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest
- 4.04 – *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (the *Green Box*), Published by Édition Rrose Sélavy (1934); One colour plate and ninety-three loose collotype facsimiles of notes and drawings housed in a self-hinged green flocked cardboard box; (13 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11 x 1 in.; 33.2 x 27.9 x 2.5 cm); deluxe edition of twenty, regular edition of three hundred
- 4.05 – *Handmade Stereopticon Slide* (1918 – 1919); Pencil on gelatine silver prints mounted on black-paper-surfaced-board; (2 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.; 6.8 x 17.2 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest
- 4.06 – Man Ray, *Lampshade* (1921); Painted (white) tin, metal rod, wing bolt, square bolt, round metal flange, screwed to round wood base; (45 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 3 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 115.3 x 7.7 cm); Yale University Art Gallery, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest
- 4.07 – Joseph Stella, *Brooklyn Bridge* (1919 – 1920); Oil on canvas (84 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 76 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; 215.3 x 194.6 cm); Yale University Art Gallery, Société Anonyme Collection
- 4.08 – Interior view of the Société Anonyme Galleries at 19 East 47<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, 1920; Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

- 4.09 – Postcard showing Jacques Villon's *In Memoriam* (1919) with lace frame; Photograph by Man Ray, 1920; Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- 4.10 – *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913 – 1914); Assemblage, founded on chance: three pieces of thread, each one meter long, dropped from a height of one metre onto canvas and glued into place, canvas attached to glass panels ( $7\frac{1}{4} \times 49\frac{3}{8} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$  in.; 18.4 x 125.4 x 0.6 cm); three wood slats shaped along one edge to match the curvature of the thread ( $2\frac{1}{2} \times 43 \times \frac{1}{8}$  in.; 6.2 x 109.2 x 0.2 cm); all housed within a wooden croquet box ( $11\frac{1}{8} \times 50\frac{7}{8} \times 9$  in.; 28.2 x 129.2 x 22.7 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest
- 4.11 – *Fresh Widow* (1920); Miniature French window; painted wood frame and eight panes of glass covered with black leather ( $30\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{5}{8}$  in.; 77.5 x 44.8 cm), on a painted wood sill ( $\frac{3}{4} \times 21 \times 4$  in.; 1.9 x 53.4 x 10.2 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest
- 4.12 – *Rotary Glass Plates (Precision Optics)* (1920); Five painted glass plates (braced with wood and metal) turning on a metal axle; ( $65\frac{1}{4} \times 62 \times 38$  in.; 165.7 x 157.5 x 96.5 cm); Yale University Art Gallery, Société Anonyme Collection
- 4.13 – Antoine Pevsner, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (1926); Cellulose nitrate on copper with iron ( $25\frac{3}{4} \times 37$  in.; 65.4 x 94 cm); Yale University Art Gallery, Société Anonyme Collection
- 4.14 – George L. K. Morris, *Composition* (1938); Oil on canvas ( $24\frac{1}{8} \times 18\frac{1}{8}$  in.; 61.3 x 46 cm); Yale University Art Gallery
- 4.15 – Charles Greene Shaw, *Plastic Abstraction* (1938); Oil on wood; (20 x 15 in.; 50.8 x 38.1 cm); Yale University Art Gallery
- 4.16 – *Nine Malic Moulds* (1914 – 1915); Oil, lead wire, and sheet lead on glass (cracked in 1915); ( $26 \times 39\frac{13}{16}$  in.; 66 x 101.2 cm); Private collection
- 4.17 – Katherine S. Dreier, *Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (1918); Oil on canvas (18 x 32 in.; 45.7 x 81.3 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 4.18 – *Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries, No. 2* (1914); Pencil, pen, ink and watercolour on paper ( $26 \times 39\frac{3}{8}$  in.; 66 x 99.8 cm); Yale University Art Gallery, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest
- 4.19 – *Monte Carlo Bond* (1924); Photocollage on letterpress, mounted on cardboard ( $12\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{11}{16}$  in.; 31.5 x 19.5 cm); Planned edition of thirty, though less than eight were completed
- 4.20 – *Landscape* (January – February 1911); Oil on canvas ( $18\frac{1}{4} \times 24\frac{1}{8}$  in.; 46.3 x 61.3 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest
- 5.01 – *Designs for Chessmen* (1920); Ink, pencil and relief printing on four sheets of paper (each  $8\frac{5}{8} \times 9$  in.; 21.9 x 22.9 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest
- 5.02 – *Once More to this Stair* (November – December 1911); Pencil on paper ( $9\frac{13}{16} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$  in.; 25 x 16.5 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 5.03 – *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 1* (December 1911); Oil on cardboard on panel ( $37\frac{3}{4} \times 23\frac{3}{4}$  in.; 95.9 x 60.3 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 5.04 – *The Box of 1914* (1913 – 1914); Photographic facsimiles of drawings and

- manuscript notes, mounted on 16 matboards (each  $9 \frac{7}{16} \times 7 \frac{1}{16}$  in.; 24 x 18 cm); housed within a commercial photographic supply box edition of 5
- 5.05 – *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (the *Large Glass*); (1961; replica by Ulf Linde of 3.12); Oil and lead on glass; ( $111 \frac{1}{4} \times 66 \frac{1}{2}$  in.; 283 x 169 cm); Inscribed on verso: “*pour copie conforme, Marcel Duchamp, Stockholm, 1961*” Moderna Museet, Stockholm
- 5.06 – *Nine Malic Moulds* (1963; replica by David Hayes of 4.16); Colour photograph between two glass plates ( $25 \frac{1}{2} \times 40 \frac{1}{4}$  in.; 64.8 x 102.2 cm); Inscribed on bottom: “*Certifié pour copie conforme Marcel Duchamp 1963*”; Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena
- 5.07 – *Rotoreliefs* (1935); Set of six cardboard disks printed on both sides in colour offset lithography; ( $7 \frac{7}{8}$  in.; 20 cm diameter) edition of 500 un-numbered sets
- 5.08 – *Three Standard Stoppages* (1963; replica by David Hayes of 4.10); Three dropped threads on canvas attached to panes of glass ( $49 \frac{1}{2} \times 7 \frac{1}{4}$  in.; 125.7 x 18.4 cm), three strips of wood cut to correspond to the curvature of the thread ( $44 \frac{1}{4}$  in.; 112.4 cm long), enclosed in a wooden croquet case (13 x 52 x 9 in.; 33.0 x 132.1 x 22.9 cm); Inscribed on one of the wooden strips: “*pour certifié conforme Marcel Duchamp 1963*”; Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena
- 5.09 – *In the Manner of Delvaux* (1963; replica by David Hayes of 6.08); Framed photograph (dimensions unknown); Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena
- 5.10 – Duchamp and Ulf Linde working on the reconstruction of the *Large Glass*; Stockholm, 1961
- 5.11 – *Rotary Glass Plates (Precision Optics)* (1961; replica by Ulf Linde of 4.12); Five painted Plexiglas plates on a metal axle turned by an electric motor ( $79 \frac{1}{2} \times 57 \frac{1}{2} \times 45 \frac{11}{16}$  in.; 202 x 146 x 116 cm); Inscribed on axle: “*certifié pour copie conforme Marcel Duchamp, Stockholm 1961*”; Moderna Museet, Stockholm
- 5.12 – *Fresh Widow* (1960; replica by Ulf Linde of 4.11); Miniature French window; painted wood frame and eight panes of glass covered with black leather ( $30 \frac{5}{16} \times 20 \frac{3}{8} \times 4 \frac{1}{8}$  in.; 77 x 51.8 x 10.5 cm); Inscribed on reverse: “*pour copie conforme Marcel Duchamp*”; Moderna Museet, Stockholm
- 5.13 – *50 cc of Paris Air* (1963; replica by Ulf Linde of 3.15); Readymade glass ampoule with a printed label reading “*Sérum Physiologique*” ( $6 \frac{7}{8} \times 2 \frac{3}{4}$  in.; 17.5 x 7 cm); Moderna Museet, Stockholm
- 5.14 – *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1963; replica by Ulf Linde of 3.15); Readymade snow shovel ( $42 \frac{15}{16}$  in.; 109 cm high); Moderna Museet, Stockholm
- 5.15 – *Traveller’s Folding Item* (1963; replica by Ulf Linde of lost 1916 original); Oilcloth; (original dimensions lost, replica:  $10 \frac{1}{4} \times 12 \frac{5}{8} \times 16 \frac{5}{16}$  in.; 26 x 32 x 41.5 cm); Moderna Museet, Stockholm
- 5.16 – *Fountain* (1950; replica by Sidney Janis of 3.11); Porcelain urinal (12 x 15 x 18 in.; 30.5 x 38.1 x 45.7 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art
- 5.17 – *Bicycle Wheel* (1951; replica by Sidney Janis of lost 1916 original); Bicycle wheel and fork mounted upside down on a kitchen stool; (original dimensions lost, replica:  $50 \frac{1}{2}$  in.; 128.7 cm high); Inscribed on the wheel in green oil: “*Marcel Duchamp 1913/1959 [sic]*”; Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 5.18 – View of the entrance to *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*; Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1963; Collection of the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena

- 5.19 – Views of the initial gallery of *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*; Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1963; Collection of the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena
- 5.20 – The chess gallery of *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*; Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1963; Collection of the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena
- 5.21 – *Pocket Chess Set* (1943); Leather, celluloid and pins ( $6\frac{5}{16} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$  in.; 16 x 10.5 cm); edition of twenty-five
- 5.22 – Marcel Duchamp and Walter Hopps playing chess while Teeny watches on, at the opening of *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*; Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1963; Photograph by Julian Wasser
- 5.23 – Eve Babitz playing chess with Marcel Duchamp, at the Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1963; Photograph by Julian Wasser
- 5.24 – John Cage and Marcel Duchamp, *Reunion* (February 1968); Performance consisting of a chess game played on a board wired with contact microphones; Ryerson Theatre in Toronto, Canada
- 5.25 – The Cubo-Futurist gallery in *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*; Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1963; Collection of the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena
- 5.26 – *Virgin, No. 2* (July 1912); Watercolour and pencil on paper ( $15\frac{3}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{8}$  in.; 40 x 25.7 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 5.27 – *The King and Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes* (April 1912); Pencil on paper ( $10\frac{3}{4} \times 15\frac{3}{8}$  in.; 27.3 x 39 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 5.28 – *Portrait (Dulcinea)* (October 1911); Oil on canvas ( $57\frac{1}{2} \times 44\frac{7}{8}$  in.; 146 x 114 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 5.29 – The *Large Glass* gallery in *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*; Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1963; Collection of the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena
- 5.30 – *Disks Inscribed with Puns* (1926); White letters pasted on nine black painted cardboard disks ( $11\frac{13}{16}$  in.; 30 cm diameter); Various private collections
- 5.31 – Marcel Duchamp's magazine cover designs: *View*, March 1945; *Minotaur*, winter 1935; *VVV Almanac for 1943*
- 5.32 – Display case showing Marcel Duchamp's graphic design projects from the final gallery of *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*; Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1963; Collection of the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena
- 5.33 – Display case showing sculptural works in multiple from the final gallery of *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*; Pasadena Art Museum, California, 1963; Collection of the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena
- 5.34 – *Twelve Hundred Coal Bags Suspended from the Ceiling over a Stove*; Photograph of Duchamp's installation for the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*, January 1938
- 5.35 – *Sixteen Miles of String*; Photograph of Duchamp's installation for the *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition, October 1942
- 5.36 – *De ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rose Sélavy* (the *Boîte-en-Valise*) (1949); Series A (deluxe edition); no. XX/XX; created for the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

- 5.37 – *By or of Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy*; Cover of the catalogue for *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*, Pasadena, 1963
- 5.38 – *A Poster Within A Poster*; Poster for *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*, Pasadena, 1963; edition of 300, twenty numbered and signed
- 5.39 – Sample page from the catalogue for *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*
- 5.40 – Julian Wasser, Photograph of Larry Bell at the opening of *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*
- 5.41 – Julian Wasser, Photograph of Ed Ruscha and Patty Callahan at the opening of *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*
- 5.42 – Julian Wasser, Photograph of Andy Warhol, Billy Al Bengston and Dennis Hopper at the opening of *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*
- 6.01 – *Rotary Demisphere (Precision Optics)* (1925); Painted papier-mâché demisphere fitted on velvet-covered disk, copper collar with Plexiglas dome, motor, pulley, and metal stand; (58  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 25  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 24 in.; 148.6 x 64.2 x 60.9 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 6.02 – *Tzanck Check* (3 December 1919); Ink on paper (8  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 15  $\frac{1}{16}$  in.; 21 x 38.2 cm); Private collection
- 6.03 – Cover of the exhibition catalogue for *Not Seen and/or Less Seen of/by Marcel Duchamp/Rose Sélavy 1904-1964*; Cordier and Ekstrom Gallery, 14 January – 13 February 1965 (11  $\frac{7}{16}$  x 8  $\frac{3}{8}$  in.; 29 x 21.2 cm)
- 6.04 – *Young Man and Girl in Spring* (Spring 1911); Oil on canvas (25  $\frac{7}{8}$  x 19  $\frac{3}{4}$  in.; 65.7 x 50.2 cm); Private collection
- 6.05 – *Seated Nude* (now called *Red Nude*) (1910); Oil on canvas (36  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 28  $\frac{3}{4}$  in.; 92 x 73 cm); National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
- 6.06 – *Chocolate Grinder, No. 2* (February 1914); Oil and thread on canvas (25  $\frac{9}{16}$  x 21  $\frac{1}{4}$  in.; 65 x 54 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
- 6.07 – *Waistcoat* (1958); Cotton flannel waistcoat with red and black stripes, and five buttons spelling out “PERET”; Private collection
- 6.08 – *In the Manner of Delvaux* (1942); Collage of tinfoil and photograph on cardboard (13  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 13  $\frac{3}{8}$  in.; 34 x 34 cm); Private collection
- 6.09 – *With My Tongue in My Cheek* (1959); Plaster on pencil and paper, mounted on wood (9  $\frac{13}{16}$  x 5  $\frac{7}{8}$  x 2 in.; 25 x 15 x 5.1 cm); Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris
- 6.10 – *Torture-Morte* (1959); Painted plaster and flies on paper background, mounted on Masonite (11  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 5  $\frac{3}{16}$  x 2  $\frac{13}{16}$  in.; 29.5 x 13.5 x 5.5 cm); Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris
- 6.11 – *Sculpture-Morte* (1959); Marzipan and insects on paper background, mounted on Masonite (13  $\frac{3}{16}$  x 8  $\frac{7}{8}$  x 2  $\frac{3}{16}$  in.; 33.5 x 22.5 x 5.5 cm); Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris
- 6.12 – *Cols Alités* (1959); Ink and pencil on paper (12  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 9  $\frac{5}{8}$  in.; 32 x 24.5 cm); Private collection
- 6.13 – *Door: 11 Rue Larrey* (1927); Wood door (86  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 24  $\frac{11}{16}$  in.; 220 x 62.7 cm); Private collection
- 6.14 – Photographs of Richard Hamilton at work on his reproduction of the *Large Glass* Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1966; From the pamphlet, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, Again*, 1966
- 6.15 – *Glider Containing Water Mill in Neighbouring Metals* (1966; replica by

- Richard Hamilton of 3.18); Oil, lead wire and foil on glass (60 x 33 in.; 153 x 84 cm); Inscribed on verso: "*Pour copie conforme / Marcel Duchamp 1966*"; Private collection
- 6.16 – *Nine Malic Moulds* (1966; replica by Richard Hamilton of 4.16); Oil, lead wire and foil on glass (26 x 41 in.; 66 x 104 cm); Private collection
- 6.17 – *Sieves* (1965; replica on glass by Richard Hamilton of 1914 original on paper); Lead wire, dust and mastic varnish on glass (18 x 24 in.; 46 x 62 cm); Private collection
- 6.18 – *Oculist Witnesses* (1966; replica on glass by Richard Hamilton of 1920 original on paper); Silver on glass (25 x 18 in.; 63 x 46 cm); Private collection;
- 6.19 – *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (the Large Glass)* (1965 – 1966; replica by Richard Hamilton of 3.12); Oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire and dust on two glass panels (109 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 69 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.; 2775 x 1759 mm); Inscribed on verso, lower left: "*Richard Hamilton / pour copie conforme / Marcel Duchamp / 1966*"; Tate Gallery, London
- 6.20 – *Sculpture for Travelling* (1966; replica by Richard Hamilton of lost 1920 original); Strips cut from rubber bathing caps, glued together at random intersections and tied with strings to the walls and ceiling of the room it occupies; (replica now disintegrated beyond repair); (dimensions variable); Inscribed "*pour copie conforme Marcel Duchamp 1966*"; Private collection
- 7.01 – *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage* (1946 – 1966); Mixed-media assemblage: (exterior) wooden door, iron nails, bricks, and stucco; (interior) bricks, velvet, wood, parchment over an armature of lead, steel, brass, synthetic putties and adhesives, aluminium sheet, welded steel-wire screen, and wood; Peg-Board, hair, oil paint, plastic, steel binder clips, plastic clothespins, twigs, leaves, glass, plywood, brass piano hinge, nails, screws, cotton, collotype prints, acrylic varnish, chalk, graphite, paper, cardboard, tape, pen ink, electric light fixtures, gas lamp (Bec Auer type), foam rubber, cork, electric motor, cookie tin, and linoleum (95 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 70 x 49 in.; 242.5 x 177.8 x 124.5 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Cassandra Foundation
- 7.02 – View of the *Étant Donnés* door
- 7.03 – Detail of the *Étant Donnés* interior
- 7.04 – *Étant Donnés: Maria, la chute d'eau et le gaz d'éclairage* (December 1947); Pencil on paper (15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; 40 x 29 cm); Moderna Museet, Stockholm
- 7.05 – *Untitled* (Collage study for *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage*) (c. 1947); Textured wax, pencil and ink on tan paper and cut gelatine silver print, mounted on board (17 x 12 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.; 43.2 x 31.1 cm); Private collection
- 7.06 – *Swiss Landscape with Waterfall* (1946); Gelatin silver prints (7 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.; 18.1 x 17.1 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art
- 7.07 – *Untitled* (Plaster study for the figure in *Étant Donnés: 1 la chute d'eau, 2 le gaz d'éclairage*) (c. 1949); Gelatin silver print (9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 7 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.; 23.5 x 19.1 cm); Private collection
- 7.08 – *Réflexion à Main* (1948); Pencil on paper with a collage of a circular mirror covered by a black circular cutout, mounted under Plexiglas (9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.; 23.5 x 16.5 cm); Original work mounted on the inside of the lid of deluxe edition *Boîte-en-Valise*, no. XVIII/XX
- 7.09 – *Le Gaz d'éclairage et la chute d'eau* (1948 – 1949); Painted leather over

- plaster relief, mounted on velvet ( $19 \frac{11}{16} \times 12 \frac{3}{16}$  in.; 50 x 31 cm); Moderna Museet, Stockholm
- 7.10 – *Not a Shoe* (1950); Galvanized plaster ( $2 \frac{3}{4} \times 2 \times 1$  in.; 7 x 5.1 x 2.5 cm); Private collection
- 7.11a – *Female Fig Leaf* (1950); Galvanized plaster ( $3 \frac{9}{16} \times 5 \frac{1}{2} \times 4 \frac{15}{16}$  in.; 9 x 14 x 12.5 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 7.11b – *Female Fig Leaf* (1950); Painted plaster ( $3 \frac{9}{16} \times 5 \frac{1}{2} \times 4 \frac{15}{16}$  in.; 9 x 14 x 12.5 cm); Private collection
- 7.12 – *Objet-dard* (1951); Galvanized plaster with inlaid lead rib ( $2 \frac{15}{16} \times 7 \frac{15}{16} \times 2 \frac{3}{8}$  in.; 7.5 x 20.1 x 6 cm); Private collection
- 7.13 – *Nous Nous Cajolions* (c. 1925); Violet ink on paper with photographic collage ( $7 \frac{1}{16} \times 5 \frac{3}{16}$  in.; 18 x 13.2 cm); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
- 7.14 – *La Fourchette du Cavalier* (1943); Pencil on card, cut out with chicken wire inserted ( $11 \times 8 \frac{7}{16}$  in.; 28 x 21.5 cm); Full sized maquette for the back cover of *VVV Almanac of 1943* (Figure 5.31c); Original work mounted on the inside of the lid of deluxe edition *Boîte-en-Valise*, no. X/XX
- 7.15 – *Wedge of Chastity* (January 1954); Galvanized plaster wedge embedded in dental plastic base ( $2 \frac{3}{16} \times 3 \frac{3}{8} \times 1 \frac{5}{8}$  in.; 5.6 x 8.6 x 4.2 cm); Private collection
- 7.16 – *Moonlight on the Bay at Basswood* (21 August 1953); Fountain pen, pencil, crayon, talcum powder and chocolate on blue blotting paper ( $10 \frac{3}{8} \times 7 \frac{1}{4}$  in.; 26.4 x 18.4 cm); Philadelphia Museum of Art
- 7.17 – *Objet-dard* (1962; replica by Arturo Schwarz of 7.12); Bronze with inlaid lead rib ( $2 \frac{15}{16} \times 7 \frac{15}{16} \times 2 \frac{3}{8}$  in.; 7.5 x 20.1 x 6 cm); edition of eight numbered and two un-numbered casts
- 7.18 – *Wedge of Chastity* (1963; replica by Arturo Schwarz of 7.15); Bronze wedge and dental plastic base ( $2 \frac{1}{8} \times 3 \frac{3}{4} \times 1 \frac{3}{4}$  in.; 5.4 x 9.5 x 4.4 cm); edition of eight numbered and two un-numbered casts
- 7.19 – Plaster Maquette for *Wedge of Chastity* (1954); Plaster in two parts, partially painted ( $2 \frac{3}{4} \times 3 \frac{7}{8} \times 2 \frac{1}{2}$  in.; 6.9 x 10 x 6.1 cm); Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 7.20 – *Female Fig Leaf* (1951; replica by Man Ray of 7.11a); Painted plaster cast ( $3 \frac{9}{16} \times 5 \frac{1}{2} \times 4 \frac{15}{16}$  in.; 9 x 14 x 12.6 cm); edition of ten numbered casts
- 7.21 – *Female Fig Leaf* (1961; Galerie Rive Droite replica of 7.11a); Bronze ( $3 \frac{1}{2} \times 5 \frac{3}{4} \times 5$  in.; 8.9 x 14.6 x 12.7 cm); edition of ten un-numbered casts
- 7.22 – Cover of *Le Surréalisme, Même, no. 1* (October 1956); ( $7 \frac{11}{16} \times 7 \frac{11}{16}$  in.; 19.5 x 19.5 cm)
- 7.23 – *The Bec Auer* (January 1968); Etching and aquatint on paper ( $16 \frac{9}{16} \times 10 \frac{1}{16}$  in.; 42 x 25.5 cm); From *The Large Glass and Related Works, with Nine Etchings by Marcel Duchamp on the Theme of The Lovers, vol. 2*
- 7.24 – *Hanging Gas Lamp (Bec Auer)* (1903 – 1904); Charcoal on paper ( $8 \frac{13}{16} \times 6 \frac{3}{4}$  in.; 22.4 x 17.2 cm); Private collection
- 7.25 – Photographs of Teeny assisting with the *Étant Donnés*
- 7.26 – Lighting diagram from the *Manual of instructions for the Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage*

## Introduction

Andre Breton once described his friend Marcel Duchamp as “the most intelligent man of the twentieth century.”<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Duchamp’s biographer, Calvin Tomkins, credited him with the ambition of putting painting “at the service of the mind.”<sup>2</sup> Duchamp’s intellect and skill as a deft and artful strategist have, in fact, become the watchwords of the mythology that surrounds his life and work. Though few would question the veracity of such statements, fewer still have been inclined to question the role that Duchamp’s prodigious intellect played in the progress and development of his career. This thesis attempts to examine the many and subtle ways in which Duchamp worked throughout his life to control how he and his work were perceived, both by his contemporary public and ultimately by posterity. Duchamp’s goal in so doing was preservation and renown, and ultimately to ensure that he would be remembered when “posterity gives its final verdict.”<sup>3</sup>

Duchamp went to great pains throughout his life to project an air of detached disinterest when queried about his own career and even disdain when questioned about art world institutions such as museums, dealers, and galleries. Despite this projected self-image, it is no secret that a substantial portion of Duchamp’s work is

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\* *Note to the reader*: throughout the body of this thesis, when two or more sources have been cited within a single footnote, they have been separated through the use of a full stop and double space.

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. by Ron Padgett, (London: Da Capo, 1979), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Marcel Duchamp, ‘The Creative Act,’ talk given at a meeting of the American Federation of the Arts in Houston, April 1957; in *Marchand du Sel: The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. by Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (Basel: Gordon & Breach, 1975), pp. 138-140 (p. 140).



ensconced within one of the largest museums in the United States, the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and the remaining pieces are scattered among the most prestigious institutions in the world. This result was no accident.

In contrast to the *sang-froid* that he went to great pains to project, I argue that Duchamp was keenly aware of how he was perceived by the public. Moreover, Duchamp had a thorough understanding of the mechanisms through which these public perceptions were generated and shaped. In addition to simple awareness, I argue that Duchamp actively worked to manipulate the way in which he was presented to and perceived by the public. The goal behind this course of action, which can be traced throughout the majority of Duchamp's career, was to shore up his historical reputation; to carve out a place for himself within the annals of art history and ensure that he would not be forgotten.

The most direct way in which Duchamp exerted control over the way he was portrayed to and perceived by the public was through his own public statements and actions. These formed the basis of Duchamp's interaction with the press, and later other media, allowing Duchamp to define the underlying beliefs about himself and his work. More subtly, Duchamp simultaneously cultivated a select coterie of collectors whose friendship and admiration for his work would cement a lifelong symbiotic relationship. Among the most important benefits of this relationship for Duchamp was that it ensured a constant market for his work and placed him in the unique position of participating in the disposition of the two largest collections of his own work.

Duchamp was constantly, albeit subtly, involved in the promotion of his own work; controlling not only how his work would be displayed and perceived but more importantly how Duchamp the artist would be viewed and perceived. Even after the bulk of his work had been placed within permanent institutions Duchamp continued to shore up his reputation through his involvement in the two retrospective exhibitions of his work held during his lifetime.

Thus, this thesis is predominantly concerned with the statements, actions, and alliances of Duchamp over the course of his career. The thesis does not attempt to

present a biography of the artist as it is concerned with a specific subcategory of Duchamp's behaviour that has been largely neglected. Casting it as a biography would result in an unproductively skewed view of Duchamp's life and career. Moreover, while I give special attention to certain of Duchamp's works, notably the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No.2*, and *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau/2° le gaz d'éclairage*, I do not propose to offer a new interpretation of these works. Rather, I present a reappraisal of the significance and position of these works within Duchamp's oeuvre in light of this neglected aspect of his career.

### **Existing Literature**

It is unsurprising, in light of his present position within the annals of art history, that there is no shortage of literature regarding either Marcel Duchamp or his artistic output. The preponderance of the existing literature on Duchamp, however, is concerned with topics such as the philosophical implications of Duchamp's work, interpretations of specific works (most notably the *Large Glass*), and explorations of themes within his larger body of work. These themes include psychosexual analyses, alchemy, gender, displacement, and multiplicity among others.

That portion of the existing literature that considers Duchamp's actions and his career as a whole tends not to deal with the ways in which Duchamp's statements and activities affected the development of his career or how he was perceived. Rather, these texts tend to take Duchamp's statements about himself at face value and tend to cast Duchamp in a passive role within his own career. Events and developments that Duchamp had a hand in bringing about end up being portrayed as little more than serendipitous extensions of his fascination with chance.

To the best of my knowledge, there are only two texts that give more than a passing consideration to disjunction between Duchamp's statements and actions regarding his career. The first of these two works is Alice Goldfarb-Marquis's *Marcel Duchamp: The Bachelor Stripped Bare* (originally published under the title *Marcel Duchamp: Eros c'est la vie*).<sup>4</sup> This work, biographical in structure, was the

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<sup>4</sup> Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bachelor Stripped Bare* (Boston, MA: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2002). An earlier version of this text was published as: Alice Goldfarb-Marquis, *Duchamp: Eros, c'est la vie* (Troy, NY: Whitson Publishing Company, 1980).

first monograph to propose that Duchamp had actively worked to create a public persona and as such that Duchamp's declarations should be approached with scepticism. Due to the biographical structure that she employs, Goldfarb-Marquis does not suggest a purpose behind Duchamp's creation of a public persona, merely presupposing its existence. As such, she also does not attempt to examine the sum of his public statements or his relationship with the contemporary media.

Moreover, Goldfarb-Marquis only takes account of immediate inconsistencies between Duchamp's statements and actions, ignoring the activities he engaged in that served to shore up his reputation. There is only passing mention of Duchamp's role in the development of the Dreier and Arensberg collections as well as Duchamp's role in their disposition. Likewise there is only passing mention of Duchamp's retrospective in Pasadena, and no mention at all of the retrospective held at the Tate gallery.

In contrast to this, Mark Pohlad's doctoral dissertation *The Art of History: Marcel Duchamp and Posterity* is the only text I have found that both asserts that Duchamp created a public persona for himself and that this was done to ensure a place for himself within the pantheon of art history.<sup>5</sup> As with my thesis, Pohlad's work is concerned with Duchamp's impulse towards self preservation and the curatorial attitude Duchamp took toward his artwork. We differ sharply, however, in our assessment of the roles played by works such as the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, and the enigmatic *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage*. Both Pohlad and I treat Duchamp's relationship with his dominant patrons, the Arensbergs, as being of central importance to the pursuit of Duchamp's goals. Pohlad, though, only gives scant consideration to the role Duchamp played in finding a home for the couple's collection. Moreover, in his focus on Duchamp's relationships with his patrons the role of Katherine Dreier, though acknowledged, receives only the most cursory attention and Duchamp's role in dispersing her collection receives none at all.

Pohlad's thesis further differs from mine insofar as my thesis includes an examination of the evolution of the representation of Duchamp within the popular press in addition to examining the way in which he worked to represent himself.

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Borner Pohlad, *The Art of History: Marcel Duchamp and Posterity* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Delaware, 1994)

Finally, unlike Pohlad I focus on the two retrospective exhibitions of Duchamp's work held within the artist's life, arguing for a continued curatorial interest by Duchamp after his works had been successfully placed within museums. My thesis is the only work I am aware of which considers either of these.

It should also be mentioned that, to the best of my knowledge, the chapter on the *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* within my thesis is the only protracted examination of that signal exhibition that has ever been presented. Likewise, I know of no other account of *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition* that gives more than a superficial consideration of the relationship between the exhibition layout and its precursor in the *Boite-en-Valise*.<sup>6</sup>

## **Methodology**

In my attempt to reconstruct Duchamp's activities I have sought, as far as possible, primary documentation. For my exploration of Duchamp's relationship with the press I have gathered over 75 published interviews of Duchamp as well as the transcripts of unpublished interviews given by Duchamp held in the Alexina and Marcel Duchamp papers in the archives of the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA). I have also examined the treatment of Duchamp and his work in the major newspapers and news magazines in the United States. Additionally, as both the dominant paper of record as well as Duchamp's local paper while resident in the United States, I have given special attention to the treatment of Duchamp by *The New York Times*. This has included a complete survey of their treatment of the artist during his life from the first review of the *Armory Show* in 1913 through the posthumous unveiling of the *Étant Donnés* in 1968.

I have made further use of the archives at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in my examination of Duchamp's relationship with his patrons Walter and Louise Arensberg. The Arensberg archives and the records of the Francis Bacon Foundation along with the Alexina and Marcel Duchamp papers have helped to reconstruct the forty-five year friendship between Duchamp and his dominant patrons. The addition of the Philadelphia Museum of Art's corporate archives within the Fiske Kimball

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<sup>6</sup> Dickran Tashjian's article, 'Nothing left to Chance: Duchamp's First Retrospective,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Bonnie Clearwater, p. 61-83, is the only other account I have found of this exhibition.

Records and the personal archives of the Fiske Kimball Papers were also indispensable in reconstructing the triadic negotiations between the Arensbergs, Duchamp, and Kimball, which resulted in the couple's collection residing in Philadelphia.

Similarly, I have made extensive use of the Katherine S. Dreier papers/Société Anonyme archives held in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in my examination of the relationship between Duchamp and Dreier, his other dominant patron. This material helped to reconstruct Duchamp's friendship with Dreier and his role in her abiding project, the Société Anonyme. As with Philadelphia, the archives at Yale also helped to reconstruct the negotiations that led to the donation of the Société Anonyme collection to the University.

This material was complemented by the Alfred H. Barr, Jr. papers at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) which provided a fuller account of the relationship between Katherine Dreier and Alfred Barr, and between Barr and Duchamp. This additional insight helped to reconstruct Duchamp's considerations in the dispersal of Katherine Dreier's personal collection, the primary beneficiaries of which were Yale University and the Museum of Modern Art.

In addition to personal archives, I made use of institutional archives in my examination of the two comprehensive retrospective exhibitions of Duchamp's work that occurred within his own lifetime. I have made use of the archives of the Pasadena Art Museum (now the Norton Simon Museum of Art) regarding their 1963 exhibition *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*, available through the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art. Regarding the 1966 exhibition *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* held jointly by the Tate Gallery and the Arts Council of Great Britain, I relied heavily upon the archives of the Arts Council held by the Victoria and Albert Museum. These last were complemented by the Mary and William Sisler papers in the Museum of Modern Art archives as Mary Sisler was the largest lender to that exhibition.

Finally, I returned to the archives of the Philadelphia Museum of Art for information regarding the secret project that was to occupy the final decades of

Duchamp's life, the *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage*. While I was unable to find any information on the creation of this piece within the Alexina and Marcel Duchamp papers in Philadelphia, important information on this work was available through the Philadelphia Museum of Art's own corporate archives. The information within the Evan Hopkins Turner Records regarding the acquisition, transfer, and installation of this work in Philadelphia provided invaluable insight into this under considered work. Access to this information was, and for the time being remains, restricted and my ability to make use of it was made possible through the generous assistance of the Museum's Curator of Modern Art, Michael Taylor.

## **Chapter Breakdown**

This exploration of Duchamp's careerism begins by considering the birth of Duchamp's public persona. The first chapter examines Duchamp's initial *succès de scandale*, the *Nude Descending the Staircase, No. 2*, of 1913. It was the unveiling of this work which first brought Duchamp widespread attention in both France and the United States and formed the basis of his lifelong relationship with the American press. The second chapter continues the exploration of Duchamp's proactive relationship with an anticipated posterity by examining the interviews that accompanied his growing notoriety. It is here that we see the seeds of the public persona he worked to construct as well as indications of the historical preservation he so desired.

Concurrent with Duchamp's growing public presence he was working "behind the scenes" to shore up the physical preservation of his legacy. This less visible side to Duchamp's efforts involved the cultivation of a select coterie of collectors for his work. Thus, the third chapter examines Duchamp's relationship with his dominant patrons, Walter and Louise Arensberg. As advisor, dealer, and friend, Duchamp's works formed the core of the Arensbergs' prodigious collection; a collection that Duchamp would be instrumental in guiding to its ultimate home at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. No less important was Duchamp's relationship with Katherine Dreier, the owner of many of Duchamp's works, including the *Large Glass*. The fourth chapter examines Duchamp's relationship with Dreier and his role in the disposition of both her collection and that of their museum, the Société Anonyme.

Having helped place the two most significant collections of his own work within prominent art historical institutions, one might expect Duchamp's work to be done. He continued to bolster his reputation, however, by participating in the two large scale retrospectives of his work to occur during his lifetime. The first of these, *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*, held in Pasadena, California in 1963, is the subject of the fifth chapter. The sixth chapter examines *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, held in London in 1966.

The culmination of Duchamp's effort to ensure and preserve his place in the pantheon of art history, the *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage* is explored in the seventh chapter. Kept a secret from all but a few select individuals, this work was to be the final salvo in Duchamp's drive for remembrance. Enigmatic, elusive, and overturning much that was widely believed about Duchamp and his career; this work would ensure that Duchamp and his works were perpetually re-examined and remembered.

“The Nude Descending a Staircase Man Surveys Us”<sup>7</sup>

## The Nude Descending a Staircase

### 1

Marcel Duchamp's relationship with a broader public began in earnest in 1913, by virtue of his *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*. (figure 1.01) This painting, famously censored and removed from its planned unveiling at the 1912 *Salon des Indépendants*, was nonetheless the first of Duchamp's works to garner a large secondary audience through press attention. The press and public fascination with this work exploded exponentially following its inclusion in the groundbreaking American show, the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* in 1913. Though speculation abounds over whether Duchamp explicitly intended this work to become the *succès de scandale* that it became, there is much evidence to suggest that he did. Moreover, there is no doubt that he took full advantage of the *Nude*'s public coinage. Duchamp spent much of his life working to entrench the link between himself and the *Nude* forged by the press, and deftly employed it to keep himself in the public eye.

Duchamp had intended to show his *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* for the first time at the 1912 *Salon des Indépendants*. As they had the year before, the Puteaux Cubists arranged to have their work displayed together in one of the larger rooms of the *Salon*. Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, who had assumed leadership of the group, intended to employ this hanging to deflect criticism of the group and establish their work as “reasonable Cubism.”<sup>8</sup> With this desired projection in mind, Gleizes and Metzinger took objection to Duchamp's painting, considering it to be “a

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<sup>7</sup> [Henry McBride], ‘The “Nude Descending a Staircase Man” Surveys Us,’ *New York Tribune*, 12 September 1915, section 4, p. 2. Though unsigned, Francis Naumann has identified Duchamp's friend, the poet and critic Henry McBride, as the author of this article.

<sup>8</sup> Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), p. 81.



ridiculisation – a caricature of Cubism and didn't want to be associated with it.”<sup>9</sup> After conferring with the other members of the group, Duchamp's brothers and fellow members of the Puteaux group, Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon were sent to relay the group's verdict. As Duchamp recounted: “My brothers came to my studio the day before the show was to open and said ‘The Cubists think [the *Nude*]'s a little off beam.’ They asked, ‘Couldn't you just change the title?’”<sup>10</sup>

Duchamp had been named a *sociétaire* in 1910, and was no longer required to submit his work to the exhibition jury. Nonetheless, Duchamp complied stoically with the verdict delivered. He refused to alter the title, which was painted on the canvas; “So I said nothing. I said all right, all right, and I took a taxi to the show and took my painting and took it away. So it never was shown at the *Indépendants* of 1912, although it's in the catalogue.”<sup>11</sup> This story, an oft recited example of Duchamp's *sang-froid*, was a turning point for the young artist. As Duchamp recalled; “It helped liberate me completely from the past. I said, ‘All right, since it's like that, there's no question of joining a group – I'm going to count on no one but myself, alone.’”<sup>12</sup>

The furore that accompanied the non-exhibition of this work has become an integral part of the mythology that surrounds Duchamp and his work. In light of the Dadaist subversion that characterized Duchamp's career from 1912 onwards, many have suggested that the title and appearance of the *Nude* may have been calculated to shock and instigate controversy, either within the Puteaux group or on a larger public scale.<sup>13</sup> Such speculations are predominantly based upon the fact that Duchamp was more than familiar with the ideologies that led to the *Nude*'s exclusion.

Duchamp had been affiliated with the Puteaux group since its formation. He had spent nearly every weekend since his arrival in Paris at his brothers' home in the

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<sup>9</sup> William Seitz, ‘What's Happened to Art?’ *Vogue* (USA), 141 (15 February 1963), pp. 110-113, 129-131 (p. 112).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 83. Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, trans. by George Heard Hamilton, 2nd edn. (New York: Paragraphic Books, 1967), p. 8. Alice Goldfarb-Marquis, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bachelor Stripped Bare* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2002), p. 68.

suburb of Puteaux.<sup>14</sup> It was from these regular gatherings and garden parties in the shared garden of the homes of Raymond, Jacques and the Czech painter František Kupka that the Puteaux group's name has been derived. The discussions and debates that occurred at these gatherings formed the theoretical underpinnings of their "reasonable Cubism." It is improbable that Duchamp did not partake in the debates that coloured the group's meetings and inconceivable that he was unaware of their content. Likewise, Duchamp could not have helped but be aware of the increasingly dogmatic attitude of the group and its self-appointed leaders to their collective presentation at the *Salon*.

It is thus difficult to credit Duchamp's insistence that he did not intend to caricature the work of the Puteaux group.<sup>15</sup> He could not have been unaware of Gleizes's and Metzinger's opposition to both the nude as a subject, and to the exploration of motion in their work. Thus, the implied innocence of his protestations – that he was merely exploring the artistic implications of depicting motion, and that objection to the *Nude* stemmed solely from the fact that it "wasn't in the line that they had predicted"<sup>16</sup> – ring hollow. Further belying Duchamp's claim of innocence was the discovery by Jennifer Gough-Cooper and Jacques Caumont that Duchamp effectively smuggled the *Nude* into the *Salon des Indépendants*.<sup>17</sup> Rather than travel to the *Salon* on foot or by taxi, Duchamp "decided to take his own canvas off its stretcher, roll it up and transport it by rowing boat from Neuilly upstream to the Pont d'Alma. After restretching the canvas and delivering it to the *Salon*, Marcel return[ed] in the boat to Neuilly," thus avoiding the possibility of being stopped at the tollgate at the Porte Maillot.<sup>18</sup>

Such behaviour indicates that he anticipated scandal, and that he was willing to go to great lengths to ensure that the work was shown nonetheless. Duchamp's decision to deliver the *Nude* the day before the *Salon's* press opening is further indicative of a desire to keep the *Nude* "under the radar" until the opening. What

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<sup>14</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 35.

<sup>15</sup> Seitz, 'What's Happened to Art?', p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Jennifer Gough-Cooper & Jack Caumont, *Marcel Duchamp: Work and Life: Ephemerides on and About Marcel Duchamp*, ed. by Pontus Hulten (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press: 1993), n.p. [17 March 1912].

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

Duchamp specifically wished to accomplish with this clandestine activity is not entirely clear. From his attempts to ensure its inclusion, we can safely assume that the effect Duchamp hoped to achieve involved an audience of the press and public. While largely unsuccessful at causing a public stir, the *Nude* did garner the attention of the influential poet and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire. Having encountered the *Nude* at the *Salon de la Section d'Or* as he was completing his book *The Cubist Painters*, Apollinaire added a chapter on the young painter. Though not on the scale Duchamp had envisioned, Apollinaire did move the debate around the *Nude* into the public sphere both through his support of Duchamp and inclusion of a reproduction of the *Nude* in his book.

Though the *Nude* did not garner the desired level of scandal in Paris; it soon attained the desired fame in the United States when it became inextricably linked with the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* of 1913, more commonly known as the *Armory Show*. In an exhibition containing more than thirteen hundred works of art of various description,<sup>19</sup> the *Nude*, became the show's unquestioned *succès de scandale*. For a country bounded by Puritan sensibilities and broadly unaware of the artistic developments that were occurring in Europe, the whole of the *Armory Show* was a momentous and revolutionary experience. The rallying point for both sides of the resulting debate on modern art, however, soon became Duchamp's *Nude*.

So prominent, in fact, was the *Nude*, and so pervasive was the interest of the press that many of the American visitors to the *Armory Show* left with the impression that Duchamp and Picabia were the dominant personalities of the Cubist movement.<sup>20</sup> Why and how this work captured the imagination of a nation is, in retrospect, unclear. The most common explanation offered, is that the relative artistic naivety of the American public in 1913. While this does go some way towards an explanation of the extreme response to the show as a whole, it provides no insight into the special status

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<sup>19</sup> Milton W. Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), p. 110. The exhibition proper contained approximately 1,300 works of art. Walter Pach, one of the organizers of the exhibition, estimated that - with the inclusion of the lithographs, which were not counted among the exhibition proper - there were a grand total of 1,600 works on display.

<sup>20</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 119. Picabia shared in this position of notoriety, both through the inclusion of another popularly lampooned work (*Dances at the Spring*), and as the only European artist included in the Armory Show who had traveled to the United States for the Exhibition's opening. Conversely, Picasso's and Braque's Cubist works were not well represented.

awarded the *Nude*. There is nothing inherent to the *Nude* that should be more of a shock to the American art world than Matisse's *Blue Nude*, or Kandinsky's *Improvisation*, a far more difficult image than anything presented by the Cubists. Even among other Cubist works, it is difficult to identify what might single out the *Nude* as more worthy of attention and confusion than Braque's *L'Affiche de Kubelick*, or Picasso's *La Femme au Pot de Moutarde*, all of which were included in the exhibition. Virtually the whole of the European third of the exhibition was bound to be at least difficult for a society wherein the most *avant-garde* movement of the day was the Ashcan School, which dealt with a challenging subject matter rather than more advanced visual techniques.

If one were to look to the criticisms that surrounded the work at its initial appearance, one would see that a substantial number dealt with the moral impact that viewing this picture may have. Duchamp himself, posited that the American audience found the *Nude* to be “offensive on the religious, Puritan level,” and that this “contributed to the repercussions of the picture.”<sup>21</sup> When the New York journal, the *Independent*, ran its review of the *Armory Show*, the *Nude* was accompanied by a warning that: “anyone who finds his morals impaired by contemplation of this picture, however intent, may bring suit for damages against the artist, Marcel Duchamp.”<sup>22</sup> Yet, such a criticism seems more appropriately levied at works such as Gauguin's *Words of the Devil*, in which both the title and image of a nude adolescent girl seem well suited to offend the Puritan morality of a 1913 American audience.

The criticisms that appeared most frequently in the contemporary press, both overtly and implied, from both established critics and laymen alike, was that the title, *Nude Descending a Staircase* (the “No. 2” was usually dropped) appeared to have little to do with the content of the painting. The oft repeated descriptions of the *Nude* include: “a lot of disused golf clubs and bags,” “an assortment of half-made leather saddles,” an “elevated railway station in ruins after an earthquake,” “a dynamited suit of Japanese armour,” “a pack of brown cards in a nightmare,” “an orderly heap of broken violins,” “an academic painting of an artichoke,”<sup>23</sup> “a darky's henhouse being

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Jewett Mather Jr., ‘Newest Tendencies in Art,’ *Independent*, 6 March 1913, p. 504.

<sup>23</sup> Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show*, pp. 136-137.

blown up by giant powder,”<sup>24</sup> “a staircase descending a nude,” and the most popular, “it looks like almost anything except a nude descending a staircase, and most – though not much – like an explosion in a shingle mill.”<sup>25</sup> Whatever the criticisms’ merit as insightful descriptions, they express a dissatisfaction with the title as a description of the painting’s content and an attempt to explain what is really going on within the image.

This sense of being deliberately misled by the work’s title was more eloquently expressed by, then ex-president Theodore Roosevelt, who weighed in on the ensuing controversy in the pages of the magazine *Outlook*:

Take the picture which for some reason is called “A naked man going down stairs.” There is in my bath-room a really good Navajo rug which, on any proper interpretation of the Cubist theory, is a far more satisfactory and decorative picture. Now if, for some inscrutable reason, it suited somebody to call this rug a picture of, say, “A well-dressed man going up a ladder,” the name would fit the facts just about as well as in the case of the Cubist picture of the “Naked man going down stairs.” From the standpoint of terminology, each name would have whatever merit inheres in a rather cheap straining after effect; and from the standpoint of decorative value, of sincerity, and of artistic merit, the Navajo rug is infinitely ahead of the picture.<sup>26</sup>

Mr. Roosevelt’s comments bring out an often overlooked aspect of America’s response to European modernism in general, and Cubism in particular, the question of sincerity and scepticism. There was in much of the criticism the question “Don’t you suppose the whole thing is a hoax? Aren’t they just trying to see what we will stand?”<sup>27</sup> There were several incidences in which the *Nude* specifically was likened

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<sup>24</sup> Anonymous, ‘Art at Home and Abroad,’ *The New York Times*, 26 April 1914, section SM, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Anonymous, ‘Topics of the Times: Innocence as a Critic,’ *The New York Times*, 1 March 1913, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, ‘A Layman’s Views of an Art Exhibition,’ *Outlook*, 29 March 1913, p. 718–720 (p. 719). While possibly a derisive and intentional mistranslation, it is equally likely that Mr. Roosevelt’s reference to the *Nude* as ‘a naked *man* going down stairs’ was borne of a poor grasp of French. Many of the contemporaneous American reviewers mistakenly believed that the use of the masculine ‘*nu*’ in the title was an indication of the figure’s gender (expecting ‘*nue*’ if the figure was female), even though the masculine ‘*nu*’ is used regardless of the gender of the nude figure in question.

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Cube Root of Art,’ *Independent*, 6 March 1913, p. 492.

to the emperor's proverbial new clothes.<sup>28</sup> Other critics asserted outright that the whole Cubist movement was little more than a ploy to make money from a naïve and unsuspecting audience.<sup>29</sup>

Stemming from this sceptical approach to modern art, a great deal of fascination with the work appears to have been derived from attempts to reconcile the descriptive title *Nude Descending a Staircase* with the image it purported to describe. The *American Art News* ran a competition asking readers to find the “solution” to the *Nude Descending a Staircase*.<sup>30</sup> The winning entry was a satirical poem, which divulged the solution in its punch line; “it isn’t a lady but only a man.”<sup>31</sup> Also printed was one reader’s literal solution to the *Nude*, in which the female figure was outlined with a thick black line. (figure 1.02) In a disconcertingly genuine attempt to “discover” the nude referenced by the title, the Chicago lawyer and art collector Arthur Jerome Eddy submitted a similar diagram to the *Chicago Tribune*.<sup>32</sup> (figure 1.03) Accompanying the image was a description of how the reader could find her on his or her own. This image and its accompanying instructions were also included in a lecture on “the new schools of art” that Eddy gave to accompany the second leg of the *Armory Show*’s tour at the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>33</sup>

This disjunction between title and image was not, however, exclusive to the *Nude*. In fact, this criticism could be applied to much of the modern work on display, including the remainder of Duchamp’s own works, *Sad Young Man on a Train*, (figure 1.04) *The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes*, (figure 1.05) and *Portrait of Chess Players*. (figure 1.06) In spite of this, few of the works besides Duchamp’s *Nude* received much more than a brief mention in the press. Rather, the other half of the press’s fascination with the *Nude* appears to stem from the work’s unusual openness to caricature. The *Nude* is by no means a simple work, and was in fact among the more visually complex of the works that made up the “lunatic

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<sup>28</sup> Anon., ‘Topics of the Times: Innocence as a Critic,’ p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Kenyon Cox, ‘Cubists and Futurists are Making Insanity Pay,’ *The New York Times*, 16 March 1913, section SM, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Armory Puzzle,’ *American Art News*, 8 March 1913, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Anonymous, ‘Here She Is: White Outline Shows “Nude Descending a Staircase”,’ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 March 1913, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show*, p. 136.

fringe.”<sup>34</sup> Despite this complexity, there remained apparent enough of what one might call the vestiges of a human form that the uninitiated viewer was not completely shut out of the interpretive process. This straddling of cubistic dissolution and simplified representation was what availed the *Nude* to caricature.

The availability of this work to caricature can be seen from the most famous and clever of the cartoons satirizing the exhibiton, J. F. Griswold’s *Seeing New York with a Cubist: The Rude Descending a Staircase (Rush Hour in the Subway)*.<sup>35</sup> (figure 1.07) In this image, the repetition of the figure in the *Nude* has been transposed to the form of a busy, pushy rush hour-crowd on the New York subway, with the disruptive and jumbled quality so maligned in the original work having been turned into an equally disruptive and unpleasant necessity in commuter life. Other contemporaneous cartoons played upon the charge of illegibility levied towards the *Nude* and Cubism more generally by playing upon the idea that they make as much sense upside down as right-side up.

A telling and extensive panel by “Powers, Futurist” appears to have been an attempt to take on the whole of the *Armory Show* at once. (figure 1.08) This composite cartoon focuses most of its ire toward three of the Exhibition’s organizers, caricatured in the lower corner. Beyond this, and an evil looking interpretation of Brancusi’s *Mlle. Pogany*, the bulk of the specific artistic criticism is focused on Duchamp’s *Nude*. The most visually apparent jibe is the caricature in the upper left-hand corner, given the title “‘Sunrise in a Lumberyard’ by a Futurist Artist.” Not only is the repetition of elongated rectilinear planes along a diagonal line visually reminiscent of the *Nude*, the provided title harkens to the multiple characterisations of the work that were in circulation. Finally, to drive the point home, the child viewing the painting asks his father to buy him the “puzzle,” referencing both the newspaper sponsored puzzles and the references to the story of the “Emperor’s New Clothes” in which the joke can only be seen through the innocent and unpretentious eyes of a child.

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<sup>34</sup> Roosevelt, ‘A Layman’s Views of an Art Exhibition,’ p. 719.

<sup>35</sup> J. F. Griswold, ‘Seeing New York with a Cubist: The Rude Descending a Staircase (Rush Hour in the Subway),’ *The Evening Sun*, 20 March 1913, n.p.

The *Nude* was in for additional abuse within this panel in the lower left-hand corner. While the “painting” in this corner bears less of an overt visual connection to the *Nude*, it still retains the diagonal repetition of planes that was coming to be recognized as shorthand for the *Nude*. Moreover, its caption “Portrait of a Lady Going Up Stairs – She is Going Up Stairs Not Down Stairs Please Remember This – If She Were Coming Down Stairs it Would Be Like This...” leaves little room for doubt about its target. By making the parody only loosely reference the painting it targets, the cartoon underscores the non-referentiality, and thus lack of meaning or purpose believed to be behind both the title and image. A point that is repeated through the miniature diagram of what the image would look like upside down.

Further takes on Duchamp’s *Nude* were included in the impromptu parody exhibitions that sprung up, including the “Post-Mortem Impressionist Exhibition” held by the “Academy of Misapplied Arts.” Though by no means stellar examples of wit, the exhibition contained several parodies of the *Nude*; the most prominent of which bore the title *Food Descending a Staircase*. According to *The New York Times*’ deadpan review of the exhibition: “Though undoubtedly suggested by Marcel Duchamp’s ‘Nude Descending a Stair,’ it shows something more of a waiter with a bleeding nose tumbling down a stairway under a deluge of foodstuffs spilled from his tray than the picture of Duchamp shows of the nude.”<sup>36</sup> Another work on display, *Nude Ascending a Staircase*, did not receive commentary but leaves little doubt as to its target.

What this deluge of imagery established was that, in the span of three short months, Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, became the undisputed icon of modern art. The Association of American Artists even adopted the work as the unofficial mascot of the *International Exhibition of Modern Art*. The menu for the Association’s celebratory dinner, held at the close of the New York leg of the exhibition, bore at its centre the image of the *Nude*; the only one of the images displayed in the Exhibition to be reproduced on the Exhibition’s printed material. (figure 1.09) Though the seeds sown by the exhibition would not come to full fruition

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<sup>36</sup> Anonymous, ‘Outstrip Cubists in their Own Art,’ *The New York Times*, 23 March 1913, p. 6.



for decades, the image of the *Nude* would retain visual synonymy with modernity in America throughout the twentieth century.

As the *Nude* became the *succès de scandale* he had so desired for the *Salon des Indépendants*, Duchamp remained in Paris beyond the reach of the *Nude*'s growing notoriety. Despite his protestations to the contrary,<sup>37</sup> Duchamp almost certainly followed America's increasing fascination with the *Nude* through correspondence with his friend and *Armory Show* organizer Walter Pach. Similarly, Duchamp's good friend Francis Picabia had gone to New York to cash in on the exhibition, and can be expected to have relayed some measure of the press response.<sup>38</sup> The extent of the *succès de scandale* attained by the *Nude*, however, would not have been fully understood by Duchamp until his arrival in the United States in the summer of 1915.

Despite the two year interval, American fascination with both the *Nude* and its creator had faded little. Soon after his arrival, Duchamp found himself the subject of a bevy of interviews,<sup>39</sup> the first and most notable of which appeared under the title: "The Nude-Descending-a-Staircase Man Surveys Us."<sup>40</sup> (figure 1.10) While no other article made such prominent mention of the *Nude*, she does receive mention in every one of the articles about Duchamp in 1915. In fact, the creation of the *Nude* swiftly became the very definition of Duchamp's identity; insofar as the American popular press were concerned Duchamp was the "*Nude-Descending-a-Staircase-man*."

One can begin to get a picture of the extent to which the American public would come to identify the *Nude* as Duchamp's signature image by examining Duchamp's portrayal in the popular press. Of particular interest is the coverage of Duchamp by *The New York Times*. By no means a specialist newspaper, it has long been considered one of the most read and respected newspapers in the United States. While the newspaper is local to the city and state of New York, where Duchamp lived almost exclusively during his residency in the United States of America, it is

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<sup>37</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous, 'Picabia, Art Rebel, Here to Teach New Movement,' *The New York Times*, 16 February 1913, section 5, p. 49.

<sup>39</sup> Duchamp gave no less than six known interviews within the span of two months.

<sup>40</sup> [McBride], 'The "Nude Descending a Staircase Man" Surveys Us,' p. 2.

published not only for regional consumption but also for a national and international audience.<sup>41</sup>

Beginning with the *Armory Show* in 1913, through the announcements of his death in October of 1968, Duchamp was directly referenced by *The New York Times* approximately 444 times. Of these articles, sixty-seven deal exclusively with reports of chess tournaments. Of the remaining 377 articles wherein Duchamp's role as an artist is acknowledged, 102 of them make specific mention of the *Nude*. Thus, more than a quarter of the references made to Duchamp during his life tie him to this work. This was considerably more attention than any of Duchamp's other works received. By way of comparison, during the same period there are only 50 specific references in *The New York Times* to works by Duchamp that are not the *Nude*.

Similarly, the *Nude* was used as an illustration to articles in *The New York Times* twelve times during the course of Duchamp's life. While not excessive use by contemporary standards, it was the most frequently reproduced image associated with Duchamp. The next two most frequently reproduced of his works are the *Bride*, and *Sad Young Man on a Train*, which each were used twice during Duchamp's life. The *Nude* even appeared more frequently within the pages of *The New York Times* than did Duchamp himself, with photographs of Duchamp appearing only ten times during his life, and three of those photographs show him posed in front of the *Nude*. (figure 1.11)

The frequency of connection between Duchamp and the *Nude* was understandable in the early years of *The New York Times*' awareness of Duchamp. As articles appeared in the months and years immediately following the initial exhibition of the painting, the *Nude* itself was current and artistically newsworthy. In four of the first five such articles, Duchamp and his painting received much the same type and tone of critical attention from *The New York Times* as it received from other quarters of the American art world. When *The New York Times* ran its 'expert' assessment of

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<sup>41</sup> *The New York Times* sent copies of its paper to London in 1919, though it is unclear how long this practice continued. *The New York Times International Edition* was begun in 1948 and continued until this branch of the newspaper was subsumed into the *International Herald-Tribune* in 1967. <<http://www.nytc.com/company-timeline-1911.html>> & <<http://www.nytc.com/company-timeline-1941.html>> [both accessed 9 April 2006].

the *Armory Show* by the American academic painter Kenyon Cox, the *Nude* was used as an illustration to the article even though the painting was not referenced within the article at all. It is, despite its non-mention, the second largest illustration accompanying the review, after the portrait of Mr. Cox himself.<sup>42</sup> (figure 1.12)

More interesting are the references that begin to occur nearly a decade after the *Nude* was first shown in the United States. Many of these references are within the bounds of the expected as the *Nude* continued to be exhibited and would naturally be mentioned in reviews of such exhibitions; including such large scale shows as the *Century of Progress* exhibition at the Chicago World's Fair of 1933.<sup>43</sup> Along similar lines are comments in reviews accompanying exhibitions where other works by Duchamp were shown and the *Nude* was not. On these occasions the work is often mentioned with regret, as a piece worthy of inclusion.<sup>44</sup> What is interesting about these references, where the *Nude* is discussed as an independent work of art, is that they constitute a distinct minority within the 102 articles in which the work is mentioned.

It is the range and variety of the other references that serve as an illustration of how thoroughly this work penetrated the American psyche, becoming the visual embodiment of modernity. Twenty-six years after the work was first seen, it was proposed as a representative piece of modern art for the time capsule to be created for the 1939 New York World's Fair.<sup>45</sup> In instances as mundane as a review of Sheldon Cheney's *The Story of Modern Art*, when listing the artists whose work is considered within the text the reviewer follows Duchamp's name with the parenthetical comment: "ah 'Nude Descending a Staircase!'"<sup>46</sup> Even fifty-five years after it was first seen, artists at the multi-media arts festival *Intermedia '68* explained their work

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<sup>42</sup> 'Cubists and Futurists are Making Insanity Pay,' p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, 'Nation Wide Resources,' *The New York Times*, 28 May 1933, section X, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, 'Fifth Anniversary Show,' *The New York Times*, 30 December 1934, section X, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, 'Ave 6939!,' *The New York Times*, 11 September 1938, p. 191.

<sup>46</sup> Charles Poore, 'Books of the Times,' *The New York Times*, 21 November 1941, p. 15. Among the artists listed in the review, Duchamp was the only one to receive any elaboration and the *Nude* was the only work specifically mentioned.

in relation to the *Nude*, justifying their piece as being “an art work in line with the Siva-Sakti and Marcel Duchamp’s ‘Nude Descending a Staircase.’”<sup>47</sup>

Of these telling references to the *Nude*, the most frequent and most significant are those where reference to the work is seen as ample introduction to Marcel Duchamp’s identity as an artist. In reviews of early exhibitions in which he took part, Duchamp is referred to initially with the epithet “Duchamp of staircase fame”,<sup>48</sup> and “Marcel Duchamp, hero of the ‘Nude Descending the Stair.’[sic]”<sup>49</sup> When Duchamp was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1960, forty-seven years after the *Armory Show*, he is listed as one of three “controversial artists” among the larger group of twelve inductees and described as “Marcel Duchamp, painter of the celebrated picture ‘Nude Descending a Staircase.’”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, in *The New York Times* review of the exhibition *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* at the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery in 1965, the article begins, “Marcel Duchamp, who painted ‘Nude Descending a Staircase’ more than half a century ago...”<sup>51</sup> Even within *The New York Times*’ chess section, the whole of Duchamp’s artistic output is summarized not with reference to the chess sets he designed or his works involving the imagery of chess, but with the single sentence: “Marcel Duchamp, whose painting, ‘Nude Descending a Staircase’ was a milestone of art.”<sup>52</sup>

The persistence of the connection forged between Marcel Duchamp and the *Nude* becomes apparent not merely in the length of time for which reference to the *Nude* constituted an adequate introduction, but also the fact that it was used to explain who Duchamp was in contexts that have little to do with the *Nude* itself and occasionally little to do with Duchamp himself. In an article on the *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition, in which Duchamp acted as exhibition designer, the art critic

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<sup>47</sup> Elenore Lester, ‘Intermedia: Tune In, Turn On – And Walk Out?’, *The New York Times*, 12 May 1968, section SM, p. 30. According to the review, the piece in question – “Fanflashstick” – was a multi-media chamber incorporating strobe lights, coloured lighting, glass walls, coloured balloons, an under-floor fan, and rock music.

<sup>48</sup> Anonymous, ‘American Sculpture in the Academy Exhibition,’ *The New York Times*, 27 December 1914, section SM, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> Anonymous, ‘Society of Independents Exhibit their Paintings,’ *The New York Times*, 8 April 1917, section SM, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Anonymous, ‘Institute of Arts Picks 12 Members,’ *The New York Times*, 24 February 1960, p. 74.

<sup>51</sup> Grace Glueck, ‘Duchamp Opens Display Today of “Not Seen and/or Less Seen”,’ *The New York Times*, 14 January 1965, p. 45.

<sup>52</sup> Al Horowitz, ‘Chess: It Is Not Art Said Duchamp, Who Then Belied His Words,’ *The New York Times*, 14 June 1962, p. 30.

Edward Alden Jewell described him as, “perennially illustrious by virtue of ‘Nude Descending the Stair.’[sic]”<sup>53</sup> Similarly, in an article regarding the memorial exhibition of the paintings of Florine Stettheimer organized by Duchamp, his role is explained as follows: “This show was directed by Marcel Duchamp, the pinnacle of whose fame, so far at least as the general public is concerned, continues to be the ‘Nude Descending the Stair.’[sic]”<sup>54</sup> This last comment is offered as explanation a full thirty years after the *Nude* was first shown, and with regard to an exhibition in which none of Duchamp’s work appeared.

Similar descriptors were employed for Duchamp not only when he was designing exhibitions for his friends and associates, but also when he was acting as the spokesperson in a customs dispute regarding the sculptural work of Constantin Brancusi,<sup>55</sup> as a judge in art exhibitions<sup>56</sup> and advising art collectors.<sup>57</sup> The *Nude* is even called upon in an article appearing in the real estate section of the newspaper. A brief article about the sale of a fifty-five acre estate in New Jersey by Mrs. Alexina Duchamp necessitates the note: “Mrs. Duchamp is the wife of the French painter whose cubist ‘Nude Descending the Staircase’ is one of the most famous paintings in modern art.”<sup>58</sup>

Alexina, or Teeny as she was known, was not the only Duchamp family member to have their own identity overshadowed by the sensation of 1913. References to Duchamp and the *Nude* appear in reviews of his siblings’ work even though none of Marcel’s work appears. An exhibition of his sister Suzanne Duchamp’s work begins with the comment, “Departing widely from the work of her famous brother Marcel, whose “Nude Descending the Staircase” was such a focal point of embattled art a score of years ago,... [t]here are, to be sure, two nudes, but both are of this quotidian world and have nothing to do with hypothetical

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<sup>53</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, ‘Surrealists Open Display Tonight,’ *The New York Times*, 14 October 1942, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, “Stettheimer Art in Memorial Show”, *The New York Times*, 2 October 1946, p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> Anonymous, ‘Brancusi Bronzes Defended by Cubist,’ *The New York Times*, 27 February 1927, p. 14.

<sup>56</sup> Howard Devree, ‘Art: Pittsburgh Bicentennial Show,’ *The New York Times*, 4 December 1958, p. 36. Howard Devree, ‘Carnegie’s Moderns,’ *The New York Times*, 7 December 1958, section X, p. 23.

<sup>57</sup> Devree, ‘Art: Pittsburgh Bicentennial Show,’ p. 36.

<sup>58</sup> Anonymous, ‘Painter’s Wife Sells Estate in New Jersey,’ *The New York Times*, 10 July 1955, section R, p. 4.

staircases.”<sup>59</sup> One month later, a review of Jacques Villon’s work begins with a similar comment: “Jacques Villon (brother of the sculptor Raymond Ducham-Villon [*sic*], who died in the World War, and of Marcel Duchamp, who painted the immortal ‘Nude Descending the Stair.’”<sup>60</sup> Duchamp’s brother Raymond receives similar treatment and is described in one article as “a brother of Marcel Duchamp.”<sup>61</sup>

Marcel Duchamp and the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* are called upon further in articles where the connection to Duchamp and his work is tenuous at best. In reviews of the work of the American Impressionist painter Paul Burin, and the American printmaker Peggy Bacon, the *Nude* is offered as a counterpoint to certain more pleasant qualities in the works of the American artists.<sup>62</sup> In a particularly strained and awkwardly phrased reference, presumably to *Nude on Stairs* of 1930, a work by the Ashcan School painter John Sloan, is described thus: “The large canvas to which is affixed the same title that in connection with Marcel Duchamp’s cubist futurist masterpiece became a household word is not making its first appearance.”<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, an illustrative parallel was drawn between an untitled drawing by Picasso and the reception received by Duchamp’s *Nude* at the 1913 *Armory Show*. Alfred Stieglitz asserted in a letter to the editors of *The New York Times* that the drawing in question played an equivalent role in the 1911 exhibition of Picasso’s works at the 291 Gallery to that played by the *Nude* in 1913.<sup>64</sup> While initially drawn in a letter to the editor, the parallel was so appreciated by either the arts staff of *The New York Times* or Stieglitz himself, that it appears again almost verbatim in the review of the next show in which that untitled drawing appeared.<sup>65</sup> The *Nude*, and an interesting interpretation of Dadaism, are even called upon in a review of P. G. Wodehouse’s comic novel *Do Butler’s Burgle Banks?* in which the author is

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<sup>59</sup> Howard Devree, ‘New Shows in the Galleries,’ *The New York Times*, 24 December 1933, section X, p. 9.

<sup>60</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, ‘Art of 4 Parisians is Appraised Here,’ *The New York Times*, 13 January 1934, p. 17.

<sup>61</sup> Grace Glueck, ‘Art Notes: Fun at Home with MOMA, the Met and the Gugg,’ *The New York Times*, 18 June 1967, p. 107.

<sup>62</sup> Ruth Green Harris, ‘Paris Art Public Sees New Work by Paul Burin,’ *The New York Times*, 16 January 1927, section X, p. 11. Anonymous, ‘Peggy Bacon’s American Humor,’ *The New York Times*, 24 March 1929, p. 143.

<sup>63</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, ‘20 Artists Joined in New Exhibition,’ *The New York Times*, 4 March 1936, p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> Alfred Stieglitz, ‘Under Postage,’ *The New York Times*, 24 December 1939, p. 91.

<sup>65</sup> Howard Devree, ‘Alfred Stieglitz Opens Art Show,’ *The New York Times*, 18 October 1941, p. 17.

introduced as : “P. G. Wodehouse, who launched his high-bracket career as a stately-homes Dadaist while Duchamp’s nude was still undressing at the top of the staircase.”<sup>66</sup>

Easily the most tenuous, and possibly the most telling, reference to the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* appears in a book review regarding the *Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, or Green Box*.<sup>67</sup> (figure 4.04) The title of this article, “Lo, Marcel Duchamp Himself Descends the Stair” is the extent of the reference, as the *Nude* makes no further appearance either within the text of article or as an illustration. The extent of the meaning behind the title appears to be the expectation that the reader is able to connect Duchamp’s name with that of his most famous work. The connection between Duchamp and the *Nude* drawn by the title of the review is all the more significant for the open acknowledgement on the part of the reviewer that he is unsure as to nature or purpose of the *Green Box*.<sup>68</sup> The only conclusion regarding the *Green Box* that the reviewer was willing to draw with any certainty was that “Marcel Duchamp has scribbled notes and plans and drawings that relate, it appears, to projects upon which he was at work between 1911 and 1915. What more precisely it may all be about, this reviewer has even less idea than has Henry McBride, who mentioned the *divertissement* recently.”<sup>69</sup>

The fact that confusion persists about the referent of the notes within the *Green Box* when both the *Box* and the work to which the notes refer, the *Large Glass*, have the same formal title is telling. It indicates not only that the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* was the most significant of Duchamp’s works in the eyes of *The New York Times*, it was also the only one with which there was any substantial familiarity. Thus, lacking any explanation of the notes within the *Green Box*, the natural assumption appears to have been that they must have something to do with the *Nude*.

None of this is to imply, however, that the prominence of the *Nude* within the popular press was entirely against Duchamp’s wishes. Duchamp did complain to

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<sup>66</sup> Charles Poore, ‘Books of the Times,’ *The New York Times*, 12 September 1968, p. 45.

<sup>67</sup> Anonymous, ‘Lo, Marcel Duchamp Himself Descends the Stair,’ *The New York Times*, 30 June 1935, section X, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

interviewers early in his career about his frustration at the *Nude*'s popularity, as he feared that the *Nude*'s notoriety came at the price of his own. In line with this, Michael Taylor has highlighted Duchamp's early and unsuccessful attempts to supplant the *Nude* in the public imagination with the later work, the *Chocolate Grinder*.<sup>70</sup> (figure 6.06) Even as Duchamp desired to distance himself from his now iconic work he understood the value of the public currency the *Nude* held. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the first public artistic reference to the *Nude* following Duchamp's arrival in the United States embodies his dual desire to move beyond the *Nude*, while still relying upon the work's recognizability. This work, the Dadaist literary exercise *The* bears no discernable connection to the *Nude*. (figure 3.04) Regardless, when Duchamp originally published the work in the October 1916 issue of *The Rogue* he employed the lengthy title: *THE, Eye Test, Not a 'Nude Descending a Staircase'*.<sup>71</sup>

Duchamp's decision to make reference to the *Nude* in the title of *The* was, on the one hand, an effort to move beyond his earlier work. The identification of *The* as not being to do with the *Nude* was superfluous. Readers of the *avant-garde* poetry magazine *The Rogue*, whose contributors were among regular attendees of the Arensbergs' salons, did not need to have it explained to them that this short piece had nothing to do with the *Nude*. Rather, the ostensible purpose of the reference was as a public declaration that he was putting the *Nude* behind him with a piece that indicated the literary and absurdist direction he now pursued. In making this reference, however, Duchamp was further entrenching the coinage of the *Nude*, prolonging its ubiquity through literary as well as visual reference. Not only adding to the variety of references to this work, Duchamp was also relying upon the notoriety of the *Nude* as an indicator of his own identity, reiterating the actions of the popular press.

Mere textual allusions would not be the end of the references to the *Nude*. Even before the publication of *The*, Duchamp had begun to work on a full scale reproduction of the notorious *Nude*. It was the greatest regret of his newfound patron and life-long friend Walter Arensberg, that he was not able to purchase the *Nude*. To

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<sup>70</sup> Michael Taylor, 'New York,' in *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris*, ed. by Leah Dickerman (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2006.), pp. 277-299 (p. 281).

<sup>71</sup> Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, revised and expanded paperback edition (New York: Delano Greenidge, 2000), no. 334, pp. 638-639.



hold the place of the work until the original could be acquired, Walter persuaded his beneficiary to create a replica *Nude*. Rather than completely re-create the original work, Duchamp arranged to have a high quality black and white photograph of the work taken and printed at life-size. This print was then “touched-up,” adding colour with watercolour, ink, pencil and pastel. The resulting work, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 3*, was dated 1912-1916 and had the bracketed addition “[*films*]” after Duchamp’s signature, marking the new work as the “son” of the original.<sup>72</sup> (figure 1.13)

*Nude, No. 3* was not the only child of the original, however. Duchamp’s preparations for the Arensbergs’ replica involved the creation of a study, presumably to test the proposed process of applying colour to a photograph. Thus, several months prior to the creation of the full-sized *Nude, No. 3*, Duchamp engaged in a similar process, applying colour to a 35.2 x 20.9 centimetre photograph of the *Nude*.<sup>73</sup> (figure 1.14) Interestingly, it appears that Duchamp did not consider this small *Nude* to be a work in its own right. The date and title, again applied directly onto the image, was identical to that of the original *Nude, No. 2*. Duchamp did not feel the need to add the completion date for this version; it was a straight reproduction and was not sufficiently important to have its relation to the original recorded.

The *Nude* would have yet another descendant before the end of Duchamp’s first stay in the United States. Duchamp was among the artists and intellectuals who frequented the salons of the Stettheimer sisters. The abiding project of Carrie, the eldest of the three sisters, was the creation and maintenance of an elaborate twelve-room dollhouse. Among the more remarkable features of this dollhouse was its “art gallery,” which contained approximately twenty miniature works of art in all media, with scores more scattered throughout the house; all of which she had solicited from the salons’ attendees. In 1918, Duchamp added to the miniature art collection a 9.3 x 6.1 centimetre pencil ink and wash version of his famous painting, the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 4*.<sup>74</sup> (figure 1.15) So popular was this contribution, that when the dollhouse was ultimately presented to the Museum of the City of New York

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., no. 343, p. 647.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., no. 335, p. 640.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., no. 359, p. 661.

in 1945, the resulting article in *The New York Times* made special mention of this well-recognized item, paying it more attention than any of the other paintings or sculptures by prominent artists.<sup>75</sup>

These early recapitulations of the *Nude* were each singular re-creations of the work, and created at the behest of Duchamp's close friends. When Duchamp again returned to the image of the *Nude* in 1937, he produced them much larger quantities intended for commercial sale. Of these, the most significant reproductions were produced for inclusion within Duchamp's *Boîte-en-Valise*, a portable retrospective in miniature of sixty-nine of his most important works. (figure 5.36) Not only was the *Nude* one of the works selected for inclusion, she appears prominently as one of the twelve items within the upright portion of the *Boîte*'s built-in display. More than 300 *Boîtes* were produced within Duchamp's lifetime, propagating not only the *Nude*, but its place within Duchamp's oeuvre.

In addition to the reproductions of the *Nude* contained within the *Boîte*, several other copies of the *Nude* were created for sale on their own. Duchamp proposed to make additional hand-coloured pochoir reproductions of "my better things,"<sup>76</sup> that could be sold in order to finance the creation of the *Boîte*. It is unknown how many such images Duchamp prepared or sold, all that is known is that the only two images Duchamp ultimately chose for this endeavour were the *Bride*, and *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*.<sup>77</sup> (figure 1.16) Virtually identical to those created for inclusion in the *Boîte*,<sup>78</sup> these limited-edition reproductions were adorned along their lower margin with a five centime stamp and Duchamp's signature.<sup>79</sup> One

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<sup>75</sup> Anonymous, 'City Museum is Exhibiting Doll House with Tiny Paintings by Noted Artists,' *The New York Times*, 19 December 1945, p. 21. Other artworks that were contributed to the dollhouse include a miniature sculpture by Brancusi, and paintings by George Bellows, Gaston Lachaise and Carl Sprinchorn.

<sup>76</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 5 March 1935; in *Affectionately, Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. by Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk, trans. by Jill Taylor (Ghent: Ludion, 2000), no. 121, pp. 197-198.

<sup>77</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, nos. 456, 458, pp. 744, 745.

<sup>78</sup> The only difference between the images included within the *Boîte-en-Valise* and those not, is that those which were left out for individual sale were also left unvarnished. Ecke Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise, de ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rose Sélavy: Inventory of an Edition* (London, Thames and Hudson: 1989), p. 212.

<sup>79</sup> Duchamp had employed this technique thirteen years previously in the *Monte Carlo Bond*. Two versions of this work were created; those which were to pay dividends were distinguished from those which were 'souvenirs' by the inclusion of a 50 centime postage stamp, which was signed by 'Rose Sélavy.' Francis M. Naumann, 'Money is No Object,' *Art in America*, 91 (March 2003), pp. 67-73

can but assume that the selection of the *Nude* and the *Bride* for this endeavour was based upon an assumed public familiarity with the images, and an expectation that this would translate into sales.

In addition to these direct repetitions, Duchamp would make further reference to the work with visual nods to both the *Nude* and its perennial notoriety. In 1947 the Surrealist filmmaker Hans Richter, enlisted Duchamp's help with the collaborative film *Dreams that Money Can Buy*. Duchamp's contribution was a dream sequence comprised of video footage of the *Rotoreliefs* (figure 5.07) interspersed with footage of a minimally clad woman repeatedly descending a staircase.<sup>80</sup> (figure 1.17) In order to replicate the effects of the Cubo-Futurist faceting in the painting, Richter filmed the repeated descents through a rotating prismatic lens. In later segments the effect was exacerbated by overlaying this with footage of anthracite coal being poured down a chute.<sup>81</sup>

Even thirty-three years after the initial showing of the *Nude*, she is the dominant feature of Duchamp's vignette. The effect produced by the nude woman descending a staircase is depicted as even more hypnotic than the spiralling imagery of the *Rotoreliefs*. The prismatic lens spins slowly over the nearly nude figure, marking a much slower pace than the spinning of the *Rotoreliefs* that bracket her appearances. By the end of the vignette, the nude's prismatic lens effects are applied to the already spinning *Rotoreliefs*, causing them to spin frenetically. She not only subsumes the *Rotoreliefs*, but is an image so powerful that she almost escapes from the dream world she occupies; appearing again for the briefest of seconds as a mere

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(p.70). Inexplicably, though an example of each version is pictured, Schwarz does not acknowledge this distinction in the entry for the *Monte Carlo Bond*. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 406, pp. 703-704.

<sup>80</sup> Richter and Duchamp originally wanted the woman in this segment to be nude, but were unable to do so in order to conform to the Hayes Code and the standards set by the MPAA. (*Jeu d'Échecs avec Marcel Duchamp*, Dir. Jean-Marie Drot, broadcast on Radio Télévision Française on 8 June 1964; released on VHS as *Marcel Duchamp: A Game of Chess*, subtitled by George Burchett & Peter Templeton, Phaidon, 1995 (14:34).) Nonetheless, they did use footage of the actress with bare breasts in the third of the four descents within Duchamp's vignette.

<sup>81</sup> The still recognizable female form led one reviewer (who apparently did not recognize the reference) to describe this vignette as "just tame pornography." Bosley Crowther, "Dreams that Money Can Buy," *Psychological Study*, at 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. Playhouse, *The New York Times*, 24 April 1948, p. 11.

inverted silhouette moments after the character who has dreamed her awakens.<sup>82</sup>  
(figure 1.18)

A more tongue-in-cheek visual reference to the *Nude* appeared in the pages of the magazine *Life* in 1952.<sup>83</sup> For an article on the exhibition *Duchamp, Frères et Soeur, oeuvres d'art* at the Rose Fried gallery, the photographer from *Life* arranged to have Duchamp re-enact his famous painting. (figure 1.19) With dual reference to the *Nude*, as well as her antecedents in the work of Marey and Muybridge, (figure 1.20) *Life* created a stroboscopic photograph of a nattily dressed Duchamp descending a staircase. It is unclear whose idea the *Life* magazine re-enactment was. Duchamp's endorsement of the resulting image, however, is shown emphatically by the adoption of the photograph as the cover image for the 1967 paperback edition of Robert Lebel's monograph, *Marcel Duchamp*. (figure 1.21)

The choice of the *Nude* as the emblematic image of his first *catalogue raisonné* was underscored as early as 1960, when the work was first published in the United States. Grove press, the American publishers of the catalogue, commissioned Duchamp to design a window display promoting the book at Bamberger's department store in Newark, New Jersey.<sup>84</sup> This, the last of the four window displays designed by Duchamp over the course of his career, was the first one to promote a book about himself. (figure 1.22)

For this display, Duchamp borrowed the painting, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 3*, from the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The painting was placed in the upper left-hand corner of a framed recess within one of the windows abutting Bamberger's main entrance.<sup>85</sup> To the left of the painting were arranged boxes of graduated heights, and a series of five armless, hairless, nude mannequins, positioned one on each step. The effect of this arrangement was such that the central figure of the *Nude* appeared to burst forth from her two-dimensional world, continuing down her staircase and into the real world. The other components of the display were also

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<sup>82</sup> Duchamp's vignette, called 'Disks,' can be viewed at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJ5Cl30\\_KvE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJ5Cl30_KvE) [accessed 19 January 2010].

<sup>83</sup> Winthrop Sargeant, 'Dada's Daddy,' *Life*, 32 (28 April 1952), pp. 100-106, 108, 111 (pp. 100-101).

<sup>84</sup> For the only published material on this neglected window display see, Hellmut Wohl, 'Marcel Duchamp in Newark,' *The Burlington Magazine*, 145 (January 2003), pp. 36-39.

<sup>85</sup> Wohl, 'Marcel Duchamp in Newark,' p. 36.

incorporated into this extension of the *Nude* into reality, with reproductions of other works and open copies of the *catalogue raisonné* overlapping one another as if in extension of the eponymous staircase.

To the right of the framed recess were placed six prints of the double portrait of Duchamp taken by Victor Obsatz in 1952,<sup>86</sup> arranged like successive cells of a strip of film. This juxtaposition not only acted as the author portrait, but also harkened back to the earlier stroboscopic image of Duchamp descending the staircase. So successful was this particular re-creation of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* that it soon fell prey to the same problem that beset its predecessor. Only two days after Duchamp installed the display, he had to return: “the naked mannequins had outraged the populace of Newark, and the window had to go.”<sup>87</sup>

Before Duchamp’s death, the *Nude* would again burst out of her two-dimensional world, this time under the auspices of the exhibition that brought about her initial notoriety. In 1963, the Munson-Williams-Proctor Art Institute organized an exhibition to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the *Armory Show*. As the undisputed *enfant terrible* of the original exhibition, Duchamp was commissioned to design the poster for the anniversary exhibition.<sup>88</sup> (figure 1.23) As had the original organizers before him, (figure 1.09) Duchamp chose the *Nude* as the emblem of the exhibition. Duchamp did not, however, simply reproduce his famous painting. Rather, he chose to show only an irregularly shaped section of the original work, surrounding it with a pale blue background that occupied the majority of the poster’s surface.

The decision to depict only a segment of the work, and within such an irregular shape, has raised comment among those few who have considered the poster as a work in its own right.<sup>89</sup> The shadow-like streaks to the left of the central shape have uniformly led to the speculation that the central form was intended to be understood as a positive three-dimensional shape situated in the foreground, possibly

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Letter from Phyllis Bellows Wender, publicity director for Grove Press, to Hellmut Wohl, 17 March 2002. Quoted in Wohl, ‘Marcel Duchamp in Newark,’ p. 36.

<sup>88</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 584, p. 828.

<sup>89</sup> Francis M. Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), pp. 222-223. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 584, p. 828.

the original painting crumpled into a ball.<sup>90</sup> A more promising reading of this use of the *Nude*, however, places the *Nude* behind the blue ground rather than in front of it. Viewed in this way, the central shape is a void in the light blue foreground, through which the viewer is able to catch a glimpse of the *Nude* behind. In keeping with this reading, the irregular and jagged outline of the gap in the blue foreground appears suggestive of breaking or tearing. Thus, the shadows to the left of the gap, are cast not by a positive shape, but by the furled edges of the roughly broken barrier.

This barrier, and the restrictive view that it provides of the *Nude* beyond, draw an irresistible parallel with Duchamp's posthumous nude, *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage*.<sup>91</sup> (figure 7.03) Both works present a strange barrier between the viewer and a female form beyond, with a void seemingly created by an ambiguous act of violence. The very shape of the void in Duchamp's *Armory Show* poster echoes the shape of the hole in the brick wall of the *Étant Donnés*, and similarly provides a restricted view of the torso and upper leg of revealed female beyond. These parallels seem to confirm the observations made by Anne d'Harnoncourt, Walter Hopps and John Golding of a thematic continuity from the *Nude*, through the *Bride*, the *Large Glass* and finally the *Étant Donnés*.<sup>92</sup> This poster for the fiftieth anniversary of the *Armory Show* thus both commemorates the exhibition's most notorious work and the event which brought the *Nude* such public prominence, as well as providing a subtle hint as to her eventual destination.

For an artist who spent his career decrying repetition, his consistent return to the imagery of the *Nude* throughout his career is telling. It attests not merely to the significance of the *Nude* within his larger oeuvre, but also to Duchamp's own appreciation of the public resonance the image held. Duchamp understood, however begrudgingly at times,<sup>93</sup> that the *Nude* provided him with the much needed toehold on a wider audience. Reintroducing references to this work inspired instantaneous recognition, served as knowing reference, and guaranteed a press response. Each

<sup>90</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, pp. 222-223.

<sup>91</sup> More will be said about the *Étant Donnés* in chapter seven.

<sup>92</sup> Anne D'Harnoncourt and Walter Hopps, *Étant Donnés : 1° la chute d'eau; 2° le gaz d'éclairage : Reflections on a New Work* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1987). John Golding, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (London: Allen Lane, 1973).

<sup>93</sup> More will be said about the complex relationship between Duchamp and the *Nude* in the next chapter.

successive reference to the *Nude* would both play upon a pre-existing public familiarity and further entrench both Duchamp and the *Nude* in the broader public consciousness.

Testament to the success of Duchamp's efforts to embed the *Nude* into the dialogue of art history can be found in the fact that others artists have entered into this dialogue. Among the earliest to engage with Duchamp's *Nude* was Juan Miró, whose collage, *Nude Descending a Staircase*, dates from 1924. (figure 1.24) Another of Duchamp's contemporaries, his good friend Salvador Dali likewise created the sculptural homage, *Nude Ascending a Staircase, homage to Duchamp*, in 1974. (figure 1.25) Less flattering, the realist Hananiah Harari offered a reinterpretation of the *Nude* that parallels the image with Edward Burne-Jones's Pre-Raphaelite, *The Golden Stairs*. (figure 1.26) Gerhard Richter likewise criticized Duchamp's legacy by proxy, through his anti-Duchampian *Emma (Nude Descending a Staircase)* from 1965. (figure 1.27)

The extent to which Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* had come to permeate popular consciousness is probably best expressed through the violently sensationalist series *Live and Let Die or The Tragic End of Marcel Duchamp*. (figure 1.28) This series of eight paintings by Gilles Aillaud, Eduardo Arroyo and Antonio Recalcati, along with the accompanying manifesto, were intended as a rejection of Duchamp's effect on the development of painting. The narrative panels of the series are interspersed with images of Duchamp's most famous works, with *Fountain* and the *Large Glass* each negated by returning them to their functional origins as urinal and window respectively. The trio attempt a more direct negation of Duchamp himself in the narrative panels, depicting themselves as beating and killing the artist. The final salvo, however, is achieved by throwing Duchamp, denuded, down a flight of stairs; the effects of Duchamp and his work could only be undone through the negation of his *Nude Descending a Staircase*.

“Das Schweigen von Marcel Duchamp wird überbewertet.”<sup>94</sup>

## The Silence of Marcel Duchamp is Overrated

### 2

In his biography of Marcel Duchamp, Calvin Tomkins described the artist as the darling of interviewers. They “marvelled at how easy it was to talk with Duchamp. He replied to their questions in a relaxed, witty, highly quotable style, he never made anyone feel unintelligent, and as a result reporters rarely wrote unkind pieces about him.”<sup>95</sup> Duchamp’s affable personality would maintain him as a favourite of interviewers from the first published interview with him in 1915,<sup>96</sup> through the end of his life. This interest, steady in the earlier years became increasingly avid, with an almost exponential growth in both quantity and quality of interview beginning in the mid 1940s. This spike in interest included an issue of the arts magazine *View* devoted to Marcel Duchamp in 1945 and the first of James Johnson Sweeney’s interviews with Duchamp in 1946. Duchamp gave a steady average of at least four press interviews per decade during the first three decades following his initial arrival in New York. Between 1945 and 1954, however, the number of published interviews grew to fifteen. Another twenty interviews were given between 1955 and 1964. This number jumped to at least thirty between 1965 and his death in 1968.

Within the abundance of interviews from the 1950s and 60s, one can see not merely Duchamp’s popularity as interviewee, but also his value as an interview

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<sup>94</sup> Joseph Beuys, 11 December 1964.

<sup>95</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 15.

<sup>96</sup> Anonymous, ‘A Complete Reversal of Art Opinions by Marcel Duchamp, Iconoclast,’ *Arts and Decoration*, 5 (September 1915), pp. 427-428, 442. Designated as Duchamp’s first published interview in Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 897.



subject. No longer was Duchamp being interviewed by anonymous arts writers; as early as 1946, Duchamp was regularly interviewed by individuals who were prominently placed within art institutions, individuals who were established authorities on art, and individuals who had made names for themselves as skilled and probing interviewers. The American television station NBC commissioned the first such interview, conducted by James Johnson Sweeney for a series of programmes entitled *Conversations with Elder Wise Men*.<sup>97</sup> (figure 2.01) At the time of the interview, Sweeney was a curator with the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and director of the museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, when the fashion magazine *Vogue* wanted to interview Marcel Duchamp, it called upon the expertise of "the scholarly William Seitz"<sup>99</sup> in order to ask appropriately enlightening questions. Seitz was then the Associate Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to the predominantly art historical qualifications of his American interviewers, Duchamp's European interviewers were also revered for their penetrative skill as interviewers. The most widely known of the European interviews is Pierre Cabanne's *Entretiens Avec Marcel Duchamp*. Cabanne was the art critic for the Parisian Journal *Arts-Loisirs*,<sup>101</sup> as well as being a prolific author on the art of several centuries. His interviews of Marcel Duchamp, however, differ significantly from those performed by his American counterparts. Rather than paring down the interview to the brevity required for a magazine or newspaper article, Cabanne's extensive interview was conducted in five separate sessions, resulting in a book-length monograph. Duchamp's other significant French interview, published under the same title, was conducted by the journalist and arts writer Georges Charbonnier

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<sup>97</sup> Half-hour interviews with noted individuals were broadcast on NBC under the title 'Conversations with Elder Wise Men' between 1952 and 1956. Interviewees on the programme included Pablo Picasso, Bertrand Russell, Eleanor Roosevelt and Robert Frost. Duchamp's interview was recorded in the summer of 1955 and aired in January of 1956.

<<http://www.lib.umd.edu/LAB/COLLECTIONS/wisdom.html>> [accessed 13 January 2010].

<sup>98</sup> Lee Sorensen, 'Sweeney, James Johnson,' *The Dictionary of Art Historians*.

<<http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/sweeneyj.htm>> [accessed 13 January 2010].

<sup>99</sup> Seitz, 'What's Happened to Art?', p. 110.

<sup>100</sup> Lee Sorensen, 'Seitz, William [Chapin] "Bill",' *The Dictionary of Art Historians*.

<<http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/seitzw.htm>> [accessed 13 January 2010]. In addition to his contemporaneous role with the Museum of Modern Art, Seitz had previously been critic in residence, and associate professor at Princeton University, where he had actively campaigned for the study of newer artistic movements including Abstract Expressionism.

<sup>101</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 8.

and is similarly lengthy. Conducted in four sessions and broadcast on Radio-diffusion Télévision Française as six segments,<sup>102</sup> this substantial interview identified Marcel Duchamp as a prominent French intellectual figure in the tradition of Claude Levi-Strauss, and Edgar Varèse.<sup>103</sup>

As late as the 1960s, individuals with no notable artistic or art historical background still occasionally interviewed Duchamp. In these rare instances the interviewers themselves had attained celebrity status by virtue of interviewing the famous. Of these, the two most notable figures were the British, Joan Bakewell, and the American, Mike Wallace. Joan Bakewell's interview with Duchamp occurred on the BBC2 programme *Late Night Line Up*.<sup>104</sup> (figure 2.02) It was her work on this programme that consolidated Bakewell's reputation as a skilled interviewer, which, along with her fashionable dress and youthful good looks earned her the moniker "the thinking man's crumpet."<sup>105</sup> Mike Wallace also "became a celebrity by interviewing celebrities on television,"<sup>106</sup> though his notoriety was gained through an abrasive and confrontational interview style that led to Wallace being billed as "Mike Malice" and "the Terrible Torquemada of the TV Inquisition."<sup>107</sup> Despite their difference in style, both figures were respected for their probing interviews of prominent figures in the news, politics and society. Duchamp's appearance on such programmes indicates that as early as 1960, he was considered to be of interest to a broad enough range of individuals that he was a worthwhile subject. Moreover, his televised treatment on such general interest programmes demonstrates that Duchamp and his work were no longer seen to require a specialist intermediary.

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<sup>102</sup> Georges Charbonnier, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp* (Marseille: Andre Dimanche, 1994), p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, Edgar Varèse and Raymond Queneau were three of Charbonnier's other interview subjects, the content of whose interviews have also gone on to be published as independent texts.

<sup>104</sup> Joan Bakewell, 'BBC interview with Marcel Duchamp,' for *Late Night Line Up*, broadcast 5 June 1968; transcribed in Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, pp. 300-306 (p. 300).

<sup>105</sup> David Pickering, 'Joan Bakewell', *The Museum of Broadcast Communications* <<http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/B/htmlB/bakewelljoa/bakewelljoa.htm>> [accessed 25 September 2006].

<sup>106</sup> Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, 'On the Hot Seat: Mike Wallace interviews Marcel Duchamp,' *Art History*, 23 (March 2000), pp. 35-55 (p. 35).

<sup>107</sup> Dan Streibel, "Mike Wallace", *The Museum of Broadcast Communications* <<http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/W/htmlW/wallacemike/wallacemike.htm>> [accessed 25 September 2006].

While both the number and stature of the interviews Duchamp gave increased over time, we can also view the content of those interviews as an illustration of the development of Duchamp's public persona. Several themes recur throughout the fifty-eight years of interviews. Many of these recurring themes are well known to those familiar with Duchamp's aesthetic theorizations. As early as 1915 he made the following statement to an interviewer: "Rembrandt could never have expressed all the thoughts found in his work. In the religious age he was a great religious painter, another epoch discovered in him a profound psychologist, another a poet, still another, the last one, a master craftsman. This may prove that people give more to pictures than they take from them."<sup>108</sup> In this comment can be seen the seeds of Duchamp's 1957 lecture, "The Creative Act," one of his most significant contributions to aesthetics.<sup>109</sup>

Along the same lines, throughout a lifetime of interviews Duchamp made frequent mention of his opposition to "retinal painting." This term, his own designation for works of art that primarily demand visual interaction from the audience rather than intellectual interaction, was a topic frequently introduced into the dialogue by Duchamp. So frequent was the mention of this topic that, in a 1964 interview with Otto Hahn, Duchamp made the following comment: "I won't say retinal. I talk too much about that; in each interview I mention my rejection of retinal painting, which is concerned with the eye's reaction only..."<sup>110</sup> Even in declaring his refusal to mention this favoured topic again, he couldn't resist offering at least a brief explanation.

Still more interesting than the recurrence of well known Duchampian themes are the recurrence of themes and subjects that are less firmly embedded in the received knowledge surrounding the artist and his work. Such statements range from inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the relation of facts to the recurrence of topics and themes that Duchamp has long been considered definitively unconcerned with. These two aspects of Duchamp's interview responses are of particular interest for the

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<sup>108</sup> Anon. 'A Complete Reversal of Art Opinions,' p. 427.

<sup>109</sup> Duchamp, 'The Creative Act'; in *Marchand du Sel*, ed. by Sanouillet and Peterson, p. 138.

<sup>110</sup> Otto Hahn, 'Marcel Duchamp,' *L'Express*, July 1964, pp. 22-23; reprinted as 'Marcel Duchamp Interviewed,' in *Duchamp: Passim: A Marcel Duchamp Anthology*, ed. by Anthony Hill (Basel: Gordon and Breach, 1994), pp. 67-71 (p. 68).

contrast they present to what we know now to be the case regarding his life and activities. Of the two however, it is the inconsistencies and inaccuracies that seem to have had the greatest lasting power, as it is these comments that can be said to form the core of a persistent “Duchampian mythology.”

One of the earliest occurring of these inconsistencies deals with Duchamp’s history of military service. In the spring of 1905, just as Duchamp turned eighteen, new conscription laws came into effect in France. Under the new system, all able bodied Frenchmen were required to perform two years of compulsory military service. The only exceptions were for those in “essential professions,” which included doctors, lawyers and “art workers,” and permitted members of these professions to perform only one year’s service.<sup>111</sup> In order to qualify as an “art worker” and receive the exemption, Duchamp studied for and passed an engraver’s examination.<sup>112</sup> Thus qualified, Duchamp served his reduced service in the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment in Rouen; he entered service on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1905, was promoted to corporal in April 1906, and was discharged in October 1906.<sup>113</sup>

Having completed his period of compulsory service, Duchamp was not called up following the outbreak of the First World War, nor did he volunteer. The war progressed, however, and he was called before a draft board in January of 1915.<sup>114</sup> The ensuing physical examination uncovered a slight rheumatic heart murmur which, while not serious, rendered him “too sick to be a soldier.”<sup>115</sup> Duchamp found himself again before a selective service panel in 1917 when the United States entered the war. Not put off by his heart murmur, Duchamp was awarded the classification of “F” for foreigner.<sup>116</sup> Due to his eligibility for the draft, however remote, Duchamp was even

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<sup>111</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, pp. 19-20. Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 33.

<sup>112</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 20. For this examination, Duchamp printed one of his grandfather, Emile-Frédéric Nicolle’s, engravings, *The Hundred Towers of Rouen*, receiving 49 out of 50 from the judges.

<sup>113</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 34.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>115</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 19 January 1915; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 4, pp. 28-30. Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 140.

<sup>116</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 59. The “F” classification was the lowest priority group eligible for the draft. Duchamp could, theoretically, have been drafted by the US military, though this would not have been likely.

required to request permission before leaving the United States for Buenos Aires in 1918.<sup>117</sup>

The complexity of Duchamp's relationship with military service is belied by the responses he provided to interviewers. When asked by American interviewers about his role in the war, he consistently stressed his medical exemption: "I am excused from service on account of my heart," he told one American interviewer in 1915.<sup>118</sup> When he was asked in 1965, he offered the hyperbolic, "I was debilitated."<sup>119</sup> At no point did Duchamp offer to an American interviewer any further information regarding his, admittedly limited, military career.

By the same token, when asked about his military service by French interviewers, the reasoning provided centres around his lack of obligation and inclination rather than physical deficiency. While explaining his military service to Pierre Cabanne, in addition to pointing out that he had completed his compulsory military service, Duchamp also added, "I had the impression that I wouldn't go very far as a soldier."<sup>120</sup> Similarly, in a videotaped discussion with Duchamp's friend and fellow expatriate, the composer Edgar Varèse, Duchamp explained his move to the United States by saying; "there wasn't much to do in France, except fight. And we weren't great soldiers..." to which Varèse replied, "No, we weren't very militaristic."<sup>121</sup>

While a seemingly small distinction, what is intriguing is the nationally oriented separation of the two halves of the story of his military career. It is difficult to know why one story was offered to French audiences and another to Americans. The most readily apparent answer is that, as he was considered healthy enough to register for the American selective service, reiteration of his health status was a way of justifying his non-participation to the more nationalistic American audience. The importance of such a reiteration would have been underscored within the first interview of Duchamp, wherein he was identified as being "away from the French

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Anonymous, 'French Artists Spur on an American Art,' *New York Tribune*, 24 October 1915, section 4, pp. 2-3; reprinted in *Dada/Surrealism*, no. 14 (1985), pp. 128-135 (p. 133).

<sup>119</sup> Francis Steegmuller, 'Duchamp: Fifty Years Later,' *Show*, 3 (February 1963), pp. 28-29 (p. 28).

<sup>120</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 20.

<sup>121</sup> *Jeu d'Échecs avec Marcel Duchamp*, Dir. Drot, (17:30).

front on a furlough.”<sup>122</sup> It is impossible to determine, given the context of the comment, whether this misinformation was provided by Duchamp or assumed by his interviewer. Regardless, in this comment there is evidence of an expectation on the part of the American audience that any healthy young male would necessarily feel an obligation to defend his nation.

Additionally, there is the possibility that the reiteration of his inapparent and relatively benign medical disability was born out of a shame or embarrassment at his non-participation. His brother Raymond, who as a medical student was eligible for the same service exemption that Marcel took advantage of, applied for service as a physician, and died as a result of wounds incurred during the war. Through reiteration of his medical disability, Duchamp avoided comparison with his more patriotic brother. Whatever his motivation, the separation of the two accounts along national lines is an interesting indication that Duchamp was, despite protestations to the contrary, deeply concerned with how he was portrayed by the press.

A similar distinction between accounts along national lines can be seen in the way he explained to American and European reporters the meaning behind the name of his female alter-ego, Rose Sélavy. The name, a pun on the French *eros*, *c'est la vie*, is only fully translated and explained for English and French interviewers.<sup>123</sup> American interviewers requesting the meaning behind the name received a considerably more tidied version; in which “Rose” is explained thus:

Rose is for me – or was, in France, the most common (not vulgar), but the most popular name of the time, one you wouldn’t think of giving to a girl.

The double R, it amused me. Very few words are started with two Ls and I thought it would be amusing to start a word with two Rs.<sup>124</sup>

Only “Sélavy” was offered as a pun on *c'est la vie*.<sup>125</sup> This self-censorship was surely due to Duchamp’s understanding of elements of Puritanism that underlay American society and culture.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Anon. ‘A Complete Reversal of Art Opinions,’ p. 427.

<sup>123</sup> Anonymous, ‘Growing Up Absurd,’ *Observer*, 19 June 1966, p. 23.

<sup>124</sup> Belle Krasne, ‘A Marcel Duchamp Profile,’ *Art Digest*, 26 (15 January 1952), 11, 24 (p. 24).

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>126</sup> Duchamp’s awareness of the socio-religious history that underlay the dominant American morality can be seen comments such as that referenced in footnote 21, above.

His concern for politeness and the tender sensibilities of his prospective audience was not exclusively directed at the Americans, however. When, in the course of an interview conducted by the British artist Richard Hamilton, Duchamp began to introduce the prospect of a unity of Christian and erotic themes in the *Large Glass*, he apologetically halted his explanation by describing what he was saying as “naughty,” and ultimately trailed off with the declaration, “I am, I am ashamed of what I am saying...”<sup>127</sup> A similar situation arose on a television interview for Radio Télévision Française in 1960. The interviewer inquired about the title of Duchamp’s readymade, which in the interview had only been referred to as *la Joconde*. The conventional title of Duchamp’s altered image of the *Mona Lisa*, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, a pun on the French *elle a chaud au cul* (she has a hot ass), is written along the lower border of the image. (figure 2.03) Despite the prominent placement of the pun within the work, Duchamp demurely responded that, “*je n’ose pas vous en donner la traduction, même en anglais.*”<sup>128</sup>

This politeness was in keeping with the affability and charm that are usually attributed to Duchamp. His self-censorship however, is yet another indication of both an awareness of the sensibilities and beliefs of his audience and a willingness to moderate his statements according to their likely response. While not a particularly unusual practice, this self-censorship is in stark contrast to his oft-cited *sang-froid* and indifference to his portrayal by the press. Duchamp actively encouraged the characterization of himself as distanced and unconcerned in exchanges akin to the following:

Cabanne: So, fundamentally, you’re indifferent to what is written about you.

Duchamp: No, no, I’m interested.

Cabanne: You read it?

Duchamp: Certainly. But I forget.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Richard Hamilton, untitled interview of Marcel Duchamp, recorded by the BBC in September 1959, broadcast as ‘Marcel Duchamp Speaks,’ as part of the *Art and Anti-Art* series on the BBC Third Programme, 20 October 1962; Included in *Marcel Duchamp: the creative act* (Audio CD), ed. by Mark Dachy (Brussels: Sub Rosa Recordings, n.d.), track 5 (11:48).

<sup>128</sup> Guy Viau, ‘Changer De Nom, Simplement,’ Interview of Marcel Duchamp for Radio Télévision Canadienne, 17 July 1960; transcribed on *Tout-Fait.com: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal*, trans. by Sarah Skinner Kilborne, <[http://www.toutfait.com/online\\_journal\\_details.php?postid=1434&keyword=>](http://www.toutfait.com/online_journal_details.php?postid=1434&keyword=>) [accessed 02 December 2005].

<sup>129</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 42.

While contesting Cabanne's suggestion of indifference, Duchamp maintains an air of nonchalance with regard to the actual content of what is written about him. Some scholars have even gone so far as to assert that Duchamp "[made] misinterpretation and misreading part of his meaning," and "he never correct[ed] any of his interpreters."<sup>130</sup>

The assertion that he never corrected his interviewers is, however, untrue. Duchamp's own dispassionate posture is muted by those few instances in which he felt the need to correct the misinterpretations and misreadings of his interviewers. The most notable such instance occurred in an interview with Otto Hahn in 1964. Hahn raised an alternate reading of the signature "R. Mutt" on Duchamp's 1917 readymade *Fountain*, (figure 3.11) proposed by art historian, Rosalind Krauss. According to Krauss, the signature "R. Mutt" was intended as a pun on the German word for poverty, *armut*.<sup>131</sup> Duchamp responded to this interpretation saying:

Rosalind Krauss? The redhead? That's not it at all. You can contradict it. Mutt comes from Mott Works, the name of a large sanitary equipment manufacturer. But Mott was too close so I altered it to Mutt, after the daily strip cartoon 'Mutt and Jeff' which appeared at the time, and with which everyone was familiar. Thus, from the start there was an interplay of Mutt: a fat little funny man, and Jeff: a tall thin man...I wanted any old name. And I added Richard [French slang for money-bags]. That's not a bad name for a *pissoitière*.

Get it? The opposite of poverty. But not even that much, just R. MUTT.<sup>132</sup>

While Duchamp appears to have been amused rather than distressed by the inaccurate reading of his work, he nonetheless felt the need to both contradict it and to set the record straight. His insistence upon correcting Hahn regarding a comparatively inconsequential reading is interesting in that it further indicates Duchamp's concern for what was printed about him. More important though, Duchamp's willingness to rectify certain misinformed statements starkly highlights

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<sup>130</sup> Craig Adcock, 'Twisting Our Memory of the Past "For the Fun of It",' in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, ed. by Thierry de Duve (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 311-334 (p. 312).

<sup>131</sup> Otto Hahn did not specify the source or context of the interpretation he ascribed to Krauss.

<sup>132</sup> Hahn, 'Marcel Duchamp,' in *Duchamp Passim*, ed. by Hill, p. 69.



the instances in which he permitted and even encouraged the spread of inaccuracies. Without question, the aspect of his career regarding which Duchamp permitted and benignly fostered the greatest misunderstanding was his much vaunted “retirement.” It is these statements and the responses they elicited that are the most persistent and may be said to form the core of a Duchampian mythology.

Though Duchamp’s “retirement” itself tends to be dated from either the completion of his final painting on canvas, *Tu’m* in 1918, (figure 3.13) or the abandonment of the *Large Glass* in 1923, (figure 3.12) declarations regarding his retirement did not appear in the press until his return to the United States in 1936 to repair the *Large Glass*.<sup>133</sup> In these early comments, there is a vigour and vehemence to his declarations and reasoning. He claimed that his “attitude towards Art is that of an atheist towards religion. I would rather be shot, kill myself or kill someone than paint again.”<sup>134</sup> The reasoning Duchamp gave for such an extreme position was that “painting is out of date. It is a waste of energy.”<sup>135</sup> In the interviews that took place during his visits in the 1930’s, the attitude that Duchamp adopted with the American press was comparatively antagonistic. He made bold and sweeping statements and did not appear to draw any distinction between a retirement from art and a retirement from painting.

Following Duchamp’s escape from occupied France in 1942, and subsequent return to New York, his attitude towards art and painting had shifted substantially. Not only did he stop making such violent allusions to his attitude on art, but he no longer admitted to his much-vaunted “retirement.” From as early as 1949, Duchamp began insisting that, “I myself haven’t given up painting, I’m just not painting now, but if I have an idea tomorrow I will do it.”<sup>136</sup> This was maintained as his attitude consistently throughout the remainder of his life, insisting that, “I am searching only for a new idea. Maybe, tomorrow...”<sup>137</sup> Duchamp, in fact, offered an almost

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<sup>133</sup> Frank Merchant, ‘Restoring 1,000 Glass Bits in Panels,’ *Literary Digest*, 121, (20 June 1936), 20, 22.

<sup>134</sup> Anonymous, ‘Cubism to Cynicism,’ *Time*, 31 August 1936, p. 22.

<sup>135</sup> Merchant, ‘Restoring 1,000 Glass Bits in Panels,’ p. 20.

<sup>136</sup> Anonymous, ‘Be Shocking,’ *Time*, 54 (31 October 1949) p. 42.

<sup>137</sup> James Johnson Sweeney, ‘Marcel Duchamp,’ interviewed for the NBC programme *Conversations with Elder Wise Men*, January 1956; edited and transcribed in *Wisdom: Conversations with Elder Wise Men of Our Day*, ed. by James Nelson (New York: Norton, 1958) pp. 89-99 (p. 99).

identical amendment of his original declaration to every interviewer from 1949 onwards who attempted to query his retirement from art.

Among the most subtle elements of this shift was that, from this point on, Duchamp rarely employed the terms “art” and “painting” interchangeably again. Whenever he discussed his present artistic output, he exclusively asserted that “I am not giving up painting. I am not painting. I had the chance to [continue painting for] thirty more years [...], but I am not painting...,”<sup>138</sup> never admitting that he had given up art. This change of position is significant because it occurred at almost the exact point that Duchamp would later identify as the starting date for work on his final, and secret, project *Étant Donnés*. (figure 7.01) Thus, while he asserted and reiterated his non-involvement in painting, a technical accuracy, he deflected questions regarding his non-painterly artistic output. While assiduously avoiding lying to his interviewers, he nonetheless managed to encourage an incorrect understanding of his activities. By fostering this misunderstanding, Duchamp was able to engage with interviewers and the public at large with an ever-increasing frequency, yet keep obnubilated his great final artistic contribution.

Duchamp’s ongoing work on the installation, *Étant Donnés*, was not the only information that was concealed by the modification of his stance on his own retirement from painting. Most of the interviewers who encountered Marcel Duchamp’s post-1946 declarations that, “I haven’t given up painting; if I get an idea for a painting tomorrow, I’ll do it. I didn’t make any hard and fast resolutions at all, of any kind. I simply stopped because I didn’t have anything more to say that time,”<sup>139</sup> have interpreted them as mere affirmations of his earlier declarations of retirement. Despite the repeated clarifications of his earlier position, interviews and articles consistently provide asides such as: “Then, in 1923, in his grandest gesture of all, he announced that he was abandoning art for a worthier occupation: playing chess.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Peter Pollack, Ed Barry, Clarence J Bulliet, Lou Spence, Cloyd Head & Katherine Kuh, ‘An Interview with Marcel Duchamp at the Art Institute of Chicago, 1949,’ *Museum Studies* (Chicago), 19 (1993), pp. 96-101, 111 (p. 97).

<sup>139</sup> Jean Antoine, ‘Interview with Marcel Duchamp,’ for the series *Signe des Temps* on Belgian Television, recorded in summer 1966 and broadcast 1971; transcribed as ‘Life is a Game; Life is Art,’ trans. by Sue Rose, *The Art Newspaper*, 4 (April 1993), pp. 16-17 (p. 16).

<sup>140</sup> Anonymous, ‘Pop’s Dada,’ *Time*, 5 February 1965, p. 78, 85 (p. 85). Similar statements can be found in Merchant, ‘Restoring 1,000 Glass Bits in Panels,’ p. 22. & Krasne, ‘A Marcel Duchamp Profile,’ p. 24.

The 1952 *Life* magazine spread on Duchamp similarly asserted that, “he seems to regard his complete abandonment of art itself as an artistic achievement.”<sup>141</sup> The conflation of art and painting within this item of background information is characteristic of the vast majority of articles written about Duchamp.

What is remarkable about these misinterpretations though is the fact that Duchamp never corrected interviewers who conflated “art” and “painting,” and presumed his retirement from both. In fact, Duchamp’s implied acquiescence to such declarations was captured in the *Life* magazine article “Dada’s Daddy,” in the following exchange: “‘You know, he hasn’t painted a picture since 1923,’ an anxious lady remarked. ‘What a pity! He has done practically nothing in that time except play chess.’ Duchamp’s response to that remark was merely to nod in happy agreement.”<sup>142</sup> Similar expressions of concern over his untimely retirement were routinely met with light-hearted deflections; “I suppose you could say I spend my time breathing... I’m a *respirateur* – a breather. I enjoy it tremendously.”<sup>143</sup> On another occasion, when queried about the conditions of the art world that motivated his retirement, his affirmation concluded with the claim, “I mean I may be lazy besides.”<sup>144</sup>

So fundamental was the unchallenged notion of his retirement to the Duchampian mythology that Duchamp was even able to offer up his distinction to one interviewer from *The New York Times*. When asked by A. L. Chanin why he “abandon[ed] painting,” Duchamp responded: “Ah, but not to paint doesn’t mean that I’ve given up art.”<sup>145</sup> Surprising though such a statement appears in retrospect; Chanin, a painter himself, did not grasp the significance of the distinction. Rather Duchamp proceeded to trace the well trodden path of previous explanations, concerning himself exclusively with painting rather than art, and concluded: “I am a man whose inspiration for painting stopped, eh?”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Sargeant, ‘Dada’s Daddy,’ p. 108.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>143</sup> Anonymous, ‘Art was a Dream,’ *Newsweek*, 54 (9 November 1959), pp. 118-119 (p. 119).

<sup>144</sup> Pollack, Barry, Bulliet et al., ‘Interview with Marcel Duchamp at the AIC,’ p. 97.

<sup>145</sup> A.L. Chanin, ‘Then and Now,’ *The New York Times*, 22 January 1956, p. 197.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

That Duchamp was confident Chanin would not follow up on this distinction is beyond doubt. For the few interviewers who did inquire about the chasm that existed between his real and purported activities, Duchamp was far less forthcoming. When an interviewer from the magazine *Show* asked, “if you’ve done nothing since 1923, what have you lived on?”<sup>147</sup> Duchamp did not take the opportunity to clear up the confusion. Instead, he responded abruptly with the statement: “Tell SHOW that I’ll answer that one when I get a complete financial dossier concerning every member of the staff of SHOW.”<sup>148</sup> More gently, but equally adroit, Duchamp ended a similar line of questioning with the quip: “Fifth Ave Street [*sic*].”<sup>149</sup> Still another interviewer, inquiring about the role of chess in Duchamp’s retirement from art received the response, “It is not true that I retired from painting to concentrate on chess. I have been interested in chess since I was 13 years old.”<sup>150</sup> Even under the guise of correcting his questioner, Duchamp avoided clarifying the myth of his retirement.

The closest any interviewer came to penetrating Duchamp’s veil of misinformation was Jerry Tallmer, one of the founders of the *Village Voice*. For an article about an upcoming exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery, Tallmer asked how there could be new work on display if Duchamp “took a vow 30 years ago never to put his hand again to art.”<sup>151</sup> Duchamp’s response was characteristically evasive, but honest:

[*Duchamp:*] Not new. There are a few pieces of sculpture I made in ’53 or ’54. I don’t call that new. People get the wrong idea about my not painting. It’s true and it’s not true at the same time. But I did not make a vow. That’s all nonsense.

[*Tallmer:*] Then the myth is a myth?

[*Duchamp:*] Yes, a myth. I am ready to paint if I have an idea....

We used to have a faucet there on the fireplace a while ago. I considered it a work of art, but not public art. Art: what is a work of art? Your whole life, a

<sup>147</sup> Steegmuller, ‘Duchamp: Fifty Years Later,’ p. 29.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. Steegmuller’s capitalization.

<sup>149</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, ‘On the Hot Seat,’ p. 40.

<sup>150</sup> Harold C. Schonberg, ‘Creator of “Nude Descending” Reflects After Half a Century,’ *The New York Times*, 12 April 1963, p. 20.

<sup>151</sup> Jerry Tallmer, Interview of Duchamp, *Village Voice*, 8 April 1959; trans. by and reprinted in, Gough-Cooper & Caumont, *Ephemerides on an About Marcel Duchamp*, n.p. [8 April 1959].

producing mind, can be a work of art. Even action can be art. Even a grocer can be – *can* be – an artist.<sup>152</sup>

Though Tallmer did not fully understand the import of the answer he received, this was easily the fullest, if most oblique, acknowledgement of Duchamp's work on the posthumously unveiled *Étant Donnés*. (figure 7.01) Duchamp's musing upon the nature of art that is not made public is, with retrospect, a thinly veiled reference to his ongoing secret work.

Additionally, the "few pieces of sculpture" that Duchamp acknowledged as his new work could only have been one or more of the four sculptural by-products of the creation of the *Étant Donnés: Not a Shoe* of 1950, (figure 7.10) *Female Fig Leaf* of 1950, (figure 7.11) *Objet-dard* of 1951 (figure 7.12) and *Wedge of Chastity* from 1954.<sup>153</sup> (figure 7.15) Neither the existence of these works, nor their inclusion in the Janis gallery show was a secret. Rather, Duchamp's mention of these works was remarkable because they were so integral to the creation of the *Étant Donnés*.<sup>154</sup> These were not the only works Duchamp had completed during the period covered by the mythical vow, nor were they the only such works likely to have been included in the Janis exhibition.<sup>155</sup> Thus, Duchamp's decision to offer them as refutation of his thirty year retirement from art is further indication that the existence of the *Étant Donnés* underlay his comments.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> This untitled exhibition is not listed in Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*. The only brief mention of the exhibition I have found is in Naumann's *Affectionately, Marcel*. According to Naumann the works shown in the exhibition were *Nude, No.3* of 1917, *The Bride* of 1912, and *First Study for Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries* of 1913 (*Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, p. 334). It is unlikely that this was the extent of the works shown, if only because none of these works is sculptural, nor were any created in the 1950s. Rather, Naumann's list appears to be limited to those works borrowed from the Philadelphia Museum of Art. While it is not clear which of the four sculptures were shown, the referenced work or works is undoubtedly from this group, as they were the only sculptural works created by Duchamp in the 1950s. (Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, nos. 535, 536, 542 & 545. respectively).

<sup>154</sup> More will be said about the relationship between these works and the *Étant Donnés* in chapter seven.

<sup>155</sup> Sidney Janis owned one of the deluxe *Boîtes-en-Valise* (no. VI/XX). Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, p. 268. In Janis's earlier 1954 exhibition, *Dada*, Duchamp had been represented by an unspecified selection of reproductions taken from the *Boîte-en-Valise*, exacerbating the difficulty in determining what was shown in 1959.

As Duchamp acknowledged, “People get the wrong idea about my not painting. It’s true and it’s not true at the same time.”<sup>156</sup> He was, however, in no great hurry to clarify the situation. Duchamp confidently provided truthful answers to interviewers, secure in the knowledge that any new work or information would be interpreted through the prism of his earlier declarations. In permitting the misinterpretation of his claims of retirement, Duchamp deflected attention away from *Étant Donnés* and virtually all of his creative activities from 1923 onwards. Actively asserting a lack of interest and providing witty responses to those interviewers who queried the situation too closely also helped to entrench his reputation as a dilettante.

In addition to the inconsistencies and omissions found in his interview responses, much can also be learned by looking at those subjects that frequently recur within interviews of Duchamp. One of the most interesting and complex such topics, is his most famous work, the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* of 1912. (figure 1.01) In 1938, twenty-five years after the Armory Show, the painter Daniel MacMorris described the *Nude* as “a picture which has turned ‘Frankenstein’ on its own creator.”<sup>157</sup> Though dripping with hyperbole, the statement was a fairly accurate summation of Duchamp’s feelings toward the painting. The level of agitation, anxiety and even aggression displayed toward the *Nude* and its public reception, along with the regularity of these remarks indicates the work weighing heavily on Duchamp’s mind throughout much of his life. The comments, moreover, are not exclusively antagonistic, and occasionally display a certain fondness for the work and appreciation of its popular renown. So varied was the tone in Duchamp’s responses to the *Nude* throughout thirty years of interviews that his feelings for the work and its reception seem to have changed on an almost daily basis.

The most measured, and oft-cited description of his relationship with the *Nude*, was that offered to Pierre Cabanne in 1966:

*Duchamp*: The tiresome thing was that every time I met someone, they would say, “Oh! Are you the one who did that painting?” The funniest thing is that for at least thirty or forty years the painting was known, but I wasn’t. Nobody

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<sup>156</sup> Tallmer, Interview of Duchamp; in Gough-Cooper & Caumont, *Ephemerides on an About Marcel Duchamp*, n.p. [8 April 1959].

<sup>157</sup> Daniel MacMorris, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s Frankenstein,’ *Art Digest*, 12 (January 1938), p. 22.

knew my name. In the continental American sense of the word, “Duchamp” meant nothing. There was no connection between the painting and me.

*Cabanne*: No one connected the scandal and its author?

*Duchamp*: Not at all. They didn’t care. When they met me they said, ‘Well, fine!’ but there were only three or four who knew who I was, whereas everyone had seen the painting or reproductions, without knowing who had painted it. I really lived over there [in the United States] without being bothered by the painting’s popularity, hiding behind it, obscured. I had been completely squashed by the *Nude*.

*Cabanne*: Didn’t that correspond perfectly to your idea of the artist?

*Duchamp*: I was enchanted. I never suffered from the situation, although I was troubled when I had to answer questions from journalists.<sup>158</sup>

While the notoriety afforded both Duchamp and the *Nude* through the publicity surrounding the Armory Show made it unlikely that he was quite as unknown as he asserted here, the situation was not presented to Cabanne in anything like a pejorative fashion. In fact, the phrasing used in this account implied that there was a certain degree of intentionality in the artist’s self-described status as comparatively unknown. Duchamp’s assertion that he was “hiding behind it,” implies that the situation was actively encouraged by Duchamp, that he employed the notoriety of the *Nude* as a tool in his attempt to remain out of the limelight. Similarly, the insistence that he was never “bothered by the painting’s popularity,” and “never suffered from the situation,” is at odds with the attitude of exasperation and frustration reiterated in interviews from as early as 1938.<sup>159</sup>

According to the American painter, Daniel MacMorris, “In the twenty years since Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending the Stairs* [*sic*] clattered robot-like down its painted stairs, out of its two-dimensional prison, to become a world symbol of the rhythm of kinetics, Duchamp has become in his own words, ‘only a shadowy figure behind the reality of that painting.’”<sup>160</sup> Such claims present a distinct contrast to the air of nonchalance and disaffection put forth by Duchamp in his interview with Pierre Cabanne.

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<sup>158</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 45.

<sup>159</sup> MacMorris, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s Frankenstein,’ p. 22.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

The point was raised again in 1960 by Mike Wallace, when he asked if Duchamp had ever regretted painting the *Nude*. Duchamp insisted that he had “never been sorry.”<sup>161</sup> Wallace pressed further and asked if “the painting got ahead of Marcel Duchamp?...[if] the *painting* was more important than the man who painted it?”<sup>162</sup> to which Duchamp replied:

Yes, that I’ve been very much aware of, to the point of suffering almost from it. To think that that *woman*, the nude – she’s a woman – descending the staircase, was always ahead of me. And when they spoke of it, never, never *named* me as being the painter. Of course, it has no importance, but at the end of twenty-five years of *this* treatment you begin to feel it and you want to get in front of it instead of behind.<sup>163</sup>

In this instance the frustration indicated earlier is more evident. While Duchamp used the same language that he would later use in his interview with Cabanne, in this instance he claimed that he has suffered from the comparative popular importance of the *Nude*. More explicitly, however, it is apparent that Duchamp not only wanted, but also believed he deserved the notoriety and celebrity that had been lavished upon the painting for so long.

Easily the most vehement of these statements was that given to Dore Ashton of *Studio International* in 1966:

James Joyce is maybe Pepsi-Cola. You can’t name him without everybody knowing what you’re talking about. What happened to me is worse though. That painting [meaning *Nude* descending a staircase, which he referred to only as “that painting” throughout the interview] was known but I was not. I was obliterated by the painting and only lately have I stepped on it. I spent my life hidden behind it... You know, an artist only does one or two or three things in his whole life. The rest is just filling up the hole.<sup>164</sup> [*sic*]

This statement, which was made in the same year as the one provided to Pierre Cabanne, indicates an almost adversarial attitude towards the painting. In this

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<sup>161</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, ‘On the Hot Seat,’ p. 45. Sawelson-Gorse’s italics.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. Sawelson-Gorse’s italics.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. Sawelson-Gorse’s italics.

<sup>164</sup> Dore Ashton, ‘An interview with Marcel Duchamp,’ *Studio International*, 171 (June 1966), pp. 244-247 (p. 247). Ashton’s bracketed side note.



instance Duchamp was not claiming to be “obscured,” “a shadowy figure” “hiding behind it,” instead he here employed terms like “obliterated.” Similarly, there is an implication of struggle in phrases such as: “only lately have I stepped on it.” Ultimately, there is no greater indicator of his feelings toward *Nude Descending a Staircase* than the fact that he refused to make direct reference to the work throughout the course of the interview. The phrase “that painting” implies a depth of distaste for the work that goes beyond any of his more direct declarations.

It was not merely the statements of overt frustration and agitation regarding the relative celebrity of the *Nude* and its creator that indicate the complexity of Duchamp’s relationship with his most famous painting. Even when statements regarding the *Nude* were fairly benign in tone, there was the implication that this perceived state of affairs was wrong or unjust. Duchamp consistently felt the need to inform his interviewers that the recognition and notoriety accorded to the *Nude* had not, to Duchamp’s mind, been commensurately accorded to him. His repetition of this state of affairs was, in itself, evidence that Duchamp believed he deserved a greater share of the renown. Thus, what is of primary importance in Duchamp’s statements regarding the notoriety of the *Nude*, is that Duchamp believed he had been “ignored by the public.”<sup>165</sup>

Another recurring theme within Duchamp’s interviews is his ardent refusal to be linked with the activities or productions of other movements. While his separation from many of the movements which mark the early development of twentieth century art is frequently noted, his ties to groups such as the Puteaux Cubists, Dadaism and Surrealism are cited just as frequently.<sup>166</sup> What is rarely acknowledged is the frequency and persistence with which Duchamp insisted upon this ideological separation. From his earliest recorded interviews, he made declarations insisting upon the dangers of group affiliations: “A man is a man; an artist is an artist; if you can catalogue him under an ism he is no longer a man or artist.”<sup>167</sup> A more historical and

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<sup>165</sup> Viau, ‘Changer De Nom, Simplement,’

<[http://www.toutfait.com/online\\_journal\\_details.php?postid=1434&keyword=>](http://www.toutfait.com/online_journal_details.php?postid=1434&keyword=>) [accessed 02 December 2005].

<sup>166</sup> The recent exhibitions *Dada*, and *Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia* are but two examples of this practice.

<sup>167</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Iconoclastic Opinions of M. Marcel Duchamps [*sic*] Concerning Art and America,’ *Current Opinion*, 59 (November 1915), p. 346.

concrete example of this same sentiment has already been seen in Duchamp's account of the rejection of the *Nude* from the *Salon des Indépendents*: "All right, since it's like that, there's no question of joining a group – I'm going to count on no one but myself, alone."<sup>168</sup>

Throughout his career, Duchamp fervently worked to separate himself from retrospective identification with any movement or group. In one of the last interviews in his life Duchamp still insisted that he had always tried to "keep away from the group, the group expression, the group activity..."<sup>169</sup> Of his early associations, he assented that "cubism gave me many ideas for decomposing forms," before adding, "But I thought of art on a broader scale."<sup>170</sup> Similar statements are made regarding the two movements with which Duchamp is more frequently associated. Of the Surrealists, Duchamp claimed: "They always liked to take me in, but I never signed any of their manifestoes. Even today Breton wouldn't call me a Surrealist."<sup>171</sup> Duchamp even made moves to separate himself from the Dadaists, the movement with which he is most consistently associated today. Within the course of a documentary on his work, Duchamp reiterates, "I don't like the idea of groups...I tried to keep away for as long as possible," insisting "that's why I missed out on becoming an important Dada."<sup>172</sup> He went even further in another interview with the declaration: "'I was never a real Dadaist...But Picabia and I did something similar to it."<sup>173</sup>

Duchamp went to equal lengths to extricate his painting *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* from art historical classification with either the work of his fellow Puteaux cubists or that of the Italian futurists. He insisted repeatedly that, while he did know Severini, he had no association with the Futurists.<sup>174</sup> His only acknowledgement of influence on the *Nude* was the popular understanding of early twentieth century scientific advances such as cinema and the fourth dimension. Even

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<sup>168</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 31.

<sup>169</sup> Bakewell, 'BBC Interview with Marcel Duchamp,' in Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 302.

<sup>170</sup> James Johnson Sweeney, 'Interview,' *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin*, 13 (1946), pp. 19-21 (p. 21).

<sup>171</sup> Krasne, 'A Marcel Duchamp Profile,' p. 24.

<sup>172</sup> *Jeu d'Échecs avec Marcel Duchamp*, Dir. Drot, (42:42).

<sup>173</sup> Steegmuller, 'Duchamp: Fifty Years Later,' p. 29.

<sup>174</sup> Sweeney, 'Interview,' *MoMA Bulletin*, p. 20. Katherine Kuh, 'Marcel Duchamp,' in *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Modern Artists*, (New York: Da Capo, 2000) pp. 81-93 (p. 83). Sweeney, 'Marcel Duchamp,' in *Wisdom*, ed. by Nelson, pp. 91-92.

when admitting to influence through the chrono-photographs of Edward Muybridge and Jules-Etienne Marrey, he somewhat defensively asserted: “It doesn’t mean that I copied these photographs. The futurists were also interested in somewhat the same idea, though I was never a futurist. [*sic*] And of course the motion picture with its cinematic techniques was developing then too. The whole idea of movement, of speed was in the air.”<sup>175</sup>

The *Nude* was not the only work that he feared would be retroactively grouped with others. So abhorrent did he find ascriptions of influence that Duchamp denied with equal fervency the very possibility that he had been influenced by the work of his good friend Francis Picabia. In describing his *Coffee Mill* (figure 2.04) to one interviewer, he propounded that “The use of the arrow – as well as the entire treatment of a machine form – was new. This was before Picabia made similar paintings.”<sup>176</sup> While certainly true that the *Coffee Mill* predates Picabia use of mechanical imagery, the fervency of his declarations is peculiar. In his assertion that his work predates that of Picabia, Duchamp was not only trying to avoid being misidentified as having been influenced by his friend’s work, he was casting himself as the innovator. In order to avoid the retroactive identification of influence, he was willing to cast his friend’s work as derivative of his own.

The urgency and insistency with which he reiterated his individualist philosophy to interviewers reveals a fear that his activities and achievements would be retroactively subsumed under the banner of another movement, and thus become detached from Duchamp, himself. Evidence for this reading can also be found in Duchamp’s declarations on the primacy of the individual. A particularly enlightening quote deals with Duchamp’s fondness for the writing of Raymond Roussel: “The reason I admired him was because he produced something I had never seen. That is the only thing that brings admiration from my innermost being – something completely independent – nothing to do with the great names or influences.”<sup>177</sup> Duchamp’s ideal artist, like Nietzsche’s *übermensch*, exists above and outwith the

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<sup>175</sup> Kuh, ‘Marcel Duchamp,’ *The Artist’s Voice*, p. 83. One possible reason for Duchamp’s use of the term “copied” was that Muybridge created a series of images studying the movement of a nude female descending a set of stairs.

<sup>176</sup> Dorothy Norman, ‘Interview by Dorothy Norman,’ *Art in America*, 57 (July-August 1969), p. 38.

<sup>177</sup> Sweeney, ‘Interview,’ *MoMA Bulletin*, p. 22.

influence of social pressures and norms, and thus is capable of genuine innovation because he is not bound by these social constraints. Duchamp expressed a similarly Nietzschean admiration when he insisted to another interviewer that “the word ‘school’ only leads to the word ‘group’ and, ultimately, only individual works are produced, such as the works of a certain Leonardo da Vinci. It’s down to the individual to emerge from any so-called school. The idea of a school in itself is basically of no interest to me at all.”<sup>178</sup>

Duchamp’s admiration for Roussel and da Vinci stems explicitly from the fact that they and their work exist historically as isolated phenomena. Their work was remembered by history as having sprung, fully formed from the mind of the artist, lacking in influence or assistance. The grounding of Duchamp’s admiration for these figures illuminates the manner in which he attempted to emulate them. Thus, his assertions of independence were an attempt to ensure that his work at least began its art historical legacy without the unwanted trappings of external influence. “I’ve always wanted to make something of personal contribution to it [art], which is, can only be done if you think by yourself and not follow the general rules of the group, you see?”<sup>179</sup> Thus, when asked which of his works he thought was most “worthwhile”, Duchamp insisted that it was “The glass. The Large Glass for me is the only thing that I think shows no direct influence.”<sup>180</sup> Duchamp desired to be remembered historically as an individual, thus post hoc subsumption of his work and identity by the influence of groups or societies was a genuine concern of his through the end of his life.

Duchamp’s verbal attempts to extricate himself from the established classifications of Art History are profoundly linked with another of his recurring interview topics, that of death. As one might expect, this is not a subject that was broached within the transcripts of interviews conducted while he was still a relatively young artist. In fact, the first such mention appeared in 1946, when Duchamp was sixty years old.<sup>181</sup> The sudden appearance of a topic that was of such importance to

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<sup>178</sup> Antoine, ‘Interview with Marcel Duchamp,’ p. 16.

<sup>179</sup> Bakewell, ‘BBC Interview with Marcel Duchamp,’; in Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 302.

<sup>180</sup> Tallmer, Interview of Duchamp; in Gough-Cooper & Caumont, *Ephemerides on an About Marcel Duchamp*, n.p. [8 April 1959].

<sup>181</sup> Sweeney, ‘Interview,’ *MoMA Bulletin*, p. 21.

Duchamp, and would remain a distinct concern throughout the rest of his life, highlights one of the primary limitations presented by the changing interest in Duchamp on the part of the press. The interviews of Duchamp from between 1915 and 1945 are narrow in scope, largely concerned with specific works, and Duchamp's impressions of America. After 1945, however, the interviews became longer and wider ranging and the subject became Duchamp himself. As such, it is difficult to determine whether Duchamp's thoughts regarding death, a topic usually instigated by Duchamp himself, is a concern specific to his life after 1946 or had been edited out of earlier interviews.

Despite these limitations, from the earliest interview in which such comments appear, one can clearly perceive a distinct tenor of detachment to his remarks.<sup>182</sup> Moreover, Duchamp's comments regarding death are almost inextricably linked with the prospect of being forgotten. These dual concerns constitute the most pronounced undercurrent running through Duchamp's public statements. It is not merely his own death, or the prospect of the memory of himself fading that concerns Duchamp. In an interview with James Johnson Sweeney, Duchamp describes one of his formative influences, Jean-Pierre Brisset as "one of the real people who has lived and will be forgotten."<sup>183</sup> This reference is informative, as the dichotomy drawn is not between life and death, but having lived and being forgotten. The prospect of being forgotten is more important than death, and has in this instance, superseded it. As Brisset had died twenty-seven years prior to this interview, the fact that Duchamp described him by saying he "will be forgotten" implies that, as he was still remembered, his death was somehow not yet final.

Duchamp further directly equated public acknowledgement and acceptance with life in such statements as: "you [might be able to] get away from showing [all your life], but your son or your daughter, when you are dead would show you and you'll be resuscit [*sic*]... a resurrection and you'll do very well."<sup>184</sup> In employing

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> 'Recording of a press luncheon and round table discussion with Marcel Duchamp,' held at the opening of *Not Seen and/or Less Seen of/by Marcel Duchamp/Rose Sélavy*, Walker Art Center, 18 October 1965; the recording is accessible in real audio format (.rm) on the Walker Art Center website, 'track 4,' (4:22), < <http://collections.walkerart.org/item/archive/17> > [accessed 15 January 2010].

first the word “resuscitate” and replacing it with the stronger “resurrection” he indicates that a posthumous acclaim can, to some extent, negate or reverse the effects of death. The clear implication behind these declarations is that, to Duchamp’s mind, the physical necessities of life and death are secondary to the social consecration of one’s legacy.

Whenever Duchamp discussed in broad terms the death of an individual and the way society included or excluded him or her from the collective memory, he described this unfolding of events in a highly detached and impersonal manner. This declared position is most clear when expressed as part of his speech, “The Creative Act”, wherein he points out that, “[m]illions of artists create, only a few thousand are discussed or accepted by the spectator, and many less again are consecrated by posterity.”<sup>185</sup> Duchamp even went on in the course of this theorization to affirm that no individual, especially the artist himself, is in a position to affect this process of consecration or forgetting. The control over an artist’s memory or legacy is placed within the ambit of society as a whole, and is considered to be a response to society’s needs and beliefs.<sup>186</sup> “A genius is not made by the mind itself. It is made by the onlooker. The public needs a top mind and makes it. Anything can be on top. Genius is an invention of man, just like God.”<sup>187</sup> He insisted to another interviewer, “The crowd needs a single person to baby or to worship. Out of a dozen physicists they pick Einstein.”<sup>188</sup> The role of society in the remembrance of an artist and the transient nature of the acclaim that society bestows is a point reiterated in declarations such as: “But is Clouet such an important man? He probably is. But, I mean to say, we made [him so]. In two hundred years, maybe Clouet would be forgotten, the way El Greco [was...]. El Greco was forgotten for centuries [until recently].”<sup>189</sup>

Even though Duchamp maintained a detached lack of interest when describing both death and the condition of being forgotten, the frequency with which these subjects were mentioned indicates that they weighed heavily upon Duchamp’s mind. In 1966 he informed Pierre Cabanne that “the artist exists only if he is known.

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<sup>185</sup> Duchamp, ‘The Creative Act’; in *Marchand du Sel*, ed. by Sanouillet and Peterson, p. 138.

<sup>186</sup> Anon. ‘A Complete Reversal of Art Opinions,’ p. 427.

<sup>187</sup> Ashton, ‘An interview with Marcel Duchamp,’ p. 246.

<sup>188</sup> Steegmuller, ‘Duchamp: Fifty Years Later,’ p. 29.

<sup>189</sup> Pollack, Barry, Bulliet et al., ‘Interview with Marcel Duchamp at the AIC,’ p. 98.

Consequently, one can envisage the existence of a hundred thousand geniuses who are suicides, who kill themselves, who disappear, because they didn't know what to do to make themselves known, to push themselves, and to become famous."<sup>190</sup> Similar statements were offered when Duchamp was questioned about artistic genius; "a genius could very well be corrupted [by money]. So he won't be a genius anymore. He'll be lost; he won't come through."<sup>191</sup> This recurrence of references to the disappearance of those who do not ensure that they will be remembered is at its most poignant when Duchamp describes the American artist and early Dadaist co-conspirator Morton Schamberg who died in 1918. In describing Schamberg, Duchamp simply says that he "died very young. You know, he disappeared."<sup>192</sup>

By and large Duchamp's attitude towards the oblivion of non-remembrance was nonchalant and matter-of-fact. However, when the life and legacy under consideration was his own, there was a difference to the tone of his remarks. His response to Pierre Cabanne's direct question, "Do you think about death?" was the observation that, "Despite yourself, when you're an atheist, you're impressed by the fact that you're going to completely disappear."<sup>193</sup> Moreover, when discussing the death of the composer Satie with Otto Hahn, he changed the direction of the conversation by saying, "I'm not very brave, and I don't want to think about death."<sup>194</sup> The rather clear implication of these and other comments is that, while he had no doubts about the ephemeral nature of public reverence and the eternal non-existence that awaits those who were not blessed with its favour, he was not willing to quietly accept the possibility of oblivion for his own memory.

Duchamp addressed his interest in ensuring the preservation of his position within the public memory during an interview on the BBC programme *Late Night Line Up*. During the course of the programme, interviewer Joan Bakewell asked

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<sup>190</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 70.

<sup>191</sup> Seitz, 'What's Happened to Art?', p. 130.

<sup>192</sup> George Heard Hamilton, untitled radio interview of Marcel Duchamp, for the BBC Third Programme, recorded 19 January 1959 and broadcast 13 November 1959; transcribed as 'A Radio Interview,' in *Duchamp: Passim: a Marcel Duchamp Anthology*, ed. by Anthony Hill (Basel: Gordon and Breach, 1994), pp. 76-78 (p. 78).

<sup>193</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 107.

<sup>194</sup> Hahn, 'Marcel Duchamp,' in *Duchamp Passim*, ed. by Hill, p. 67.

Duchamp whether he believed that his anti-art or “an-art”<sup>195</sup> gestures will, “in the final reckoning,” be seen as contributing to something called art.<sup>196</sup> This prompted the following response: “[T]here were probably a hundred people like that who have given up art, and condemned it, and proved to themselves that it wasn’t/isn’t necessary, no more than religion, and so forth. And who cares for them? Nobody.”<sup>197</sup> Duchamp acknowledged that a strict adherence to his personal an-artistic principles would preclude him from consideration in the realm of art history and would ultimately necessitate that he be forgotten.

Later in the same interview, Joan Bakewell pointed out that his production, signing and sale of artworks have, despite their anti-artistic value, been very much “within the accepted standards of an artwork”, to which Duchamp replied, “Yes, in fact, I had to. Because otherwise where would I be? I’d be in an insane asylum, probably.”<sup>198</sup> This justification of his artistic and theoretical inconsistency, his desire to devalue art and yet to be remembered for his contribution to it, points toward an ulterior concern. Namely, he desired immortality through more permanent social valuation of his work. This is a point which he volunteered to James Johnson Sweeney as early as 1958, “The danger for me is to please an immediate public – the immediate public that comes around you, and takes you in, and accepts you, and gives you success and everything. Instead of that, I would rather wait for a public that will come fifty years – a hundred years – after my death.”<sup>199</sup>

That Duchamp wanted to attain immortality through the survival and enshrinement of his works can further be seen in the way that he discussed both his own creations and those of other artists. Speaking of his assisted readymade *Why Not Sneeze, Rose Sélavy?* (figure 2.05) to reporters at the time of the first public exhibition of the Arensberg collection in 1949, he described his choice of material as follows:

[These] are marble cubes because sugar would never [last]. I knew that if I used sugar, sugar would get dirty and couldn’t be cleaned, and in three years it

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<sup>195</sup> The term “an-art” was Duchamp’s preferred designation, as it is neither for nor against ‘art,’ but instead is “no [art] at all.” Richard Hamilton, ‘Marcel Duchamp Speaks,’ in *Marcel Duchamp: the creative act* (Audio CD), ed. by Dachy (17:56).

<sup>196</sup> Bakewell, ‘BBC Interview with Marcel Duchamp,’; in Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 305.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Sweeney, ‘Marcel Duchamp,’ in *Wisdom*, ed. by Nelson, p. 94.



would be destroyed, like [...] making a sculpture of soap. In making something solid or [...] durable, you [must] think of the preservation of your material.<sup>200</sup>

A similar sentiment was expressed to James Johnson Sweeney six years later, when Duchamp described the use of marble in this work as giving it “a sort of mythological effect.”<sup>201</sup> In attributing this consideration to the creative process behind *Why Not Sneeze, Rrose Sélavy?*, Duchamp acknowledged that such considerations had not only occurred, but played an active role in his decision-making processes as early as 1921.<sup>202</sup>

For Duchamp, immortality relied upon the physical immutability of his creations. He regularly decried the material degeneration of traditional oil painting; “it darkens, it needs to be restored,” and subsequently “is no longer the painting that the artist originally created.”<sup>203</sup> In his interview with Pierre Cabanne, he explained his choice of medium in the *Large Glass* (figure 3.12) in terms of art historical preservation rather than aesthetic effect.

When I had painted, I used a big thick glass as a palette and, seeing colors from the other side, I understood there was something interesting from the point of view of pictorial technique. After a short while, paintings always get dirty, yellow, or old because of oxidation. Now, my own colors were completely protected, the glass being a means for keeping them both sufficiently pure and unchanged for rather a long time.<sup>204</sup>

While this is the first instance in which Duchamp is quoted providing preservation as his reason for painting on glass, interviewers had paraphrased such sentiments as early as 1952.<sup>205</sup>

The emphasis on longevity of material within his own work is thoroughly connected with his beliefs on immortality through public acknowledgement. In his interview with William Seitz, Duchamp described the mechanics of public memory by saying “that we in 1963 and people in the year 2000 will name the top five or six

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<sup>200</sup> Pollack, Barry, Bulliet et al., ‘Interview with Marcel Duchamp at the AIC,’ p. 101.

<sup>201</sup> Sweeney, ‘Marcel Duchamp,’ in *Wisdom*, ed. by Nelson, p. 95.

<sup>202</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 897.

<sup>203</sup> Antoine, ‘Interview with Marcel Duchamp,’ p. 16.

<sup>204</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 41.

<sup>205</sup> Krasne, ‘A Marcel Duchamp Profile,’ p. 11.

men. Those who have most chance of keeping on top are the ones who have worked in very solid material that will defy time.”<sup>206</sup> In light of his own insistence on the time-defying concerns motivating his choice of materials, it is more than likely that he intended to be among “the top five or six men.” Likewise, Duchamp reiterated the connection between death and being forgotten in the words he used to discuss artists who did not share his insistence on the importance of time-defying materials. “It’s the most revolutionary – if I want to use the word this time – attitude possible because they know they’re killing themselves. It’s a form of suicide, as artists go; they kill themselves by using perishable materials. They know it will last five years, ten years, and will necessarily be destroyed, destroy itself.”<sup>207</sup> The repetition of the terms “kill” and “destroy” underscore Duchamp’s beliefs about death and immortality, while pointing out that the preservation of the artist’s memory is not the whole of his notion of immortality. Duchamp acknowledged that the artist’s memory cannot be preserved without the simultaneous preservation of the artefacts of his creation.

This understanding of the importance of the museum as the site of the preservation of art, and by extension, the creation of artistic immortality is reflected in Duchamp’s statements regarding the placement of his own works in such institutions. In the year following the opening of the Arensberg Galleries within the Philadelphia Museum of Art, James Johnson Sweeney interviewed Duchamp within the room dedicated exclusively to Duchamp’s work. While there, Sweeney asked how it felt to have all so much of his work in one museum, to which Duchamp responded: “Wonderful! ... Here I feel at home. This is my house. I have never had such a feeling of complete satisfaction.”<sup>208</sup> Duchamp reiterated this sentiment to Pierre Cabanne more than a decade later when asked whether it bothered Duchamp that so much of his work was in the relative isolation of Philadelphia. Responding in the negative, Duchamp insisted “On the contrary, I prefer it because those people really interested in me will go there. It’s not the ends of the earth.”<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Seitz, ‘What’s Happened to Art?’, p. 113.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., p. 113, 129.

<sup>208</sup> Sweeney, ‘Marcel Duchamp,’ in *Wisdom*, ed. by Nelson, p. 91.

<sup>209</sup> Pierre Cabanne, Interview of Marcel Duchamp, *Arts & Loisirs*, 5 May 1966, publication date unknown; trans. by and reprinted in, Gough-Cooper & Caumont, *Ephemerides on an About Marcel Duchamp*, n.p. [5 May 1966].

In a similar vein, the George Heard Hamilton challenged the ethicality of including Duchamp's works within museum displays, as they have traditionally been seen as "ironic reflections upon the difficulties of defining art as a function, a process."<sup>210</sup> Duchamp defended their inclusion saying: "No, it is not wrong because, after all, even if they are supposedly ironical, they still belong to the same form of human activity. Whether you object to their conception, they are still in the same medium. They are not scientific, they are artistic, even if they are against art in this way."<sup>211</sup> When Joan Bakewell raised similar contradictions between Duchamp's behaviour and ideology, Duchamp was forced to admit, however, obliquely, that strict adherence to his an-art philosophy would preclude the possibility of art historical immortality.

This desire for long-term public recognition, while not shocking in its own right, is at odds with many of the public statements Duchamp made in the course of his published interviews. The first thing which one is likely to notice, and a point to which we will return later, is the fact that Duchamp appears to be particularly hostile to other artists who openly express concern for their position in posterity. The second, and more prominent difficulty presented by Duchamp's concern with how he is remembered fifty years – a hundred years – after his death, is that it appears to be in direct conflict with his theory of the "life and death" of a work of art.

The theory of the life and death of art, which appeared in a nascent form as early as 1915,<sup>212</sup> reached its mature formulation in the early 1960s,<sup>213</sup> from which point it became a frequent topic of theorization within his interviews. As Duchamp described his theory in one of its earlier manifestations, "A painting has a very short life – from when it's painted until the perfume of it has disappeared. A rather short time – maybe years, or not even years. I think it's very important that paintings live like flowers – they bloom and fade."<sup>214</sup> The length of the work's purported life was extended in later interviews. "There is a life in a work of art which is short, even shorter than man's lifetime. I call it twenty years. After twenty years an

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<sup>210</sup> George Heard Hamilton, radio interview of Duchamp, in *Duchamp: Passim*, p. 78.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Anon. 'A Complete Reversal of Art Opinions,' p. 427.

<sup>213</sup> Seitz, 'What's Happened to Art?,' p. 131.

<sup>214</sup> Krasne, 'A Marcel Duchamp Profile,' p. 24.

Impressionist painting has ceased to be an Impressionist painting because the material, the colour, the paint has darkened so much that it's no more what the man did when he painted it."<sup>215</sup> The maximum length of time Duchamp has ever allotted to the possible life-span of a work of art was thirty years,<sup>216</sup> though in the majority of his declarations it was a mere twenty.

The introduction of this theory creates an interesting dichotomy with the other significant point of theorization central to Duchamp's ideology. This point, which has been touched upon above, deals with the role of posterity in judging and valuing an artist and his works. While deeply connected to Duchamp's comments on death, the role of posterity has been referenced and developed independently of any specific reference to death. As formulated within the essay *The Creative Act*, Duchamp asserted that, "[i]n the last analysis, the artist may shout from all the rooftops that he is a genius. He will have to wait for the verdict of the spectator in order that his declarations take a social value and that finally posterity includes him in the primer of artists' histories."<sup>217</sup> This thesis appeared again two years later in an interview with the British pop artist, Richard Hamilton. "I have a very definite theory... that a work of art exists only when the spectator has looked at it. Until then it's only something that has been done that might disappear and nobody would know about it, but the spectator consecrates it by saying, 'this is good, we'll keep it.' And the spectator in that case becomes posterity, and posterity keeps the museums full of paintings, don't they?"<sup>218</sup>

In his reiteration of these two principles, that there is both a limited viability for a work of art and that posterity is the ultimate and only judge of value for a work of art, Duchamp placed himself in an interesting paradox. The chronological limitations established by these theories result in a situation whereby the period of time during which any given work is "alive" and thus legitimately qualifies as art<sup>219</sup> is limited to the first twenty years of its existence, the very time when the spectator is

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<sup>215</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Marcel Duchamp Speaks,' in *Marcel Duchamp: the creative act* (Audio CD), ed. by Dachy (14:06).

<sup>216</sup> Seitz, 'What's Happened to Art?,' p. 131.

<sup>217</sup> Duchamp, 'The Creative Act'; in *Marchand du Sel*, ed. by Sanouillet and Peterson, p. 138.

<sup>218</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Marcel Duchamp Speaks,' in *Marcel Duchamp: the creative act* (Audio CD), ed. by Dachy (12:17).

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. (14:06).

least capable of accepting or fully understanding it. Likewise, once the point has been reached when the spectator becomes posterity,<sup>220</sup> presumably twenty to thirty years after the work's creation, and is thus better suited to make long-term value judgements, the work has "died" and become "art history."<sup>221</sup>

The designation of art history, as opposed to art itself, is a long-standing and highly pejorative one for Duchamp, and one which was best expressed by Duchamp in a 1959 interview: "[Works over twenty years of age] survive, all right, because there are curators of art history, and art history is not art. I don't believe in preserving, I think, as I said, a work of art dies."<sup>222</sup> Moreover, he remained quite firm on the necessary life-span of art, insisting that any "emanations" or sensation of life a viewer perceives in a work over twenty to thirty years of age are merely the product of the viewer's imagination.<sup>223</sup> The museum as an institution is also implicated in this distinction between art and art history, designated by Duchamp as "mausole[a] of art history,"<sup>224</sup> and "receptacles of things that have survived, probably mediocrities."<sup>225</sup> Despite this bitter criticism, it is interesting that, Duchamp should prefer his works to be appreciated as art history rather than art; that he would prefer his work to have longevity of reception rather than be experienced as living works of art.

A further indication of Duchamp's desire to attain lasting artistic success can be seen in his oft-raised thoughts on the nature of artistic genius. It has been noted by others that Duchamp's statements about genius, with the benefit of hindsight, appear to refer to his own activities.<sup>226</sup> In many ways, it is in his hypothetical descriptions of the genius, the individual and the ideal artist, that we can see the clearest formulations of how Duchamp will come to be viewed.

The primary characteristic of "genius" as described by Duchamp is lasting acclaim. This can be seen in the quote mentioned earlier in which Duchamp insists,

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<sup>220</sup> Duchamp, 'The Creative Act'; in *Marchand du Sel*, ed. by Sanouillet and Peterson, p. 138.

<sup>221</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Marcel Duchamp Speaks,' in *Marcel Duchamp: the creative act* (Audio CD), ed. by Dachy (14:38).

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. (14:43).

<sup>223</sup> Seitz, 'What's Happened to Art?,' p. 131.

<sup>224</sup> Krasne, 'A Marcel Duchamp Profile,' p. 24.

<sup>225</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Marcel Duchamp Speaks,' in *Marcel Duchamp: the creative act* (Audio CD), ed. by Dachy (13:02).

<sup>226</sup> Naumann, 'Money is No Object,' p. 72.

“the artist exists only if he is known.”<sup>227</sup> We see the same sentiment expressed in an interview in *Vogue*; “a genius could well be corrupted. So he won’t be a genius any more. He’ll be lost; he won’t come through...you could name ten for this century, there are probably forty that could have been, but they died, disappeared. They were crushed.”<sup>228</sup> The genius is the individual who survives the necessity of physical death by ensuring that his work, and by extension his existence, does not “disappear.” “Many geniuses have foundered due to their lack of direction; ultimately they could not find a way of remaining geniuses throughout their life.... Their works have disappeared as a result.”<sup>229</sup> Despite the continual derogation of the role of museums and art historians mentioned above, he goes on to insist that those works which are to be remembered “are finally classified in museums or in books that will be read in a hundred years. And those which won’t be read will disappear.”<sup>230</sup>

His further elaborations regarding the requirements for genius bear a striking resemblance to both the values he prized in himself and the activities he engaged in, particularly towards the end of his life. The first of these, and easily the most frequently mentioned, is the necessity for shock and the importance of the *succès de scandale*. “Unless a picture shocks it is nothing – a calendar painting.”<sup>231</sup> There is, for Duchamp, a two-fold purpose in the value of shock. First, “a *succès de scandale* has a chance to survive.” He goes on to say, “In 1870 a painter called Regnault painted a *Salomé* which was a great *succès de scandale*. Regnault died in the war. But people kept talking about the picture and still do. *Guernica* may not have been exactly a *succès de scandale*, but it was at least shocking.”<sup>232</sup> This point was particularly salient for Duchamp, as his own *succès de scandale*, the *Nude Descending a Staircase*, a work which he insisted was neither his favourite nor his most important,<sup>233</sup> would continue to be mentioned in virtually every interview he gave until the end of his life.

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<sup>227</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 70.

<sup>228</sup> Seitz, ‘What’s Happened to Art?’, p. 131.

<sup>229</sup> Antoine, ‘Interview with Marcel Duchamp,’ p. 16.

<sup>230</sup> Colette Roberts, ‘Interview by Colette Roberts,’ *Art in America*, 57 (July-August 1969), p. 39.

<sup>231</sup> Anon., ‘Be Shocking,’ p. 42.

<sup>232</sup> Ashton, ‘An interview with Marcel Duchamp,’ p. 245.

<sup>233</sup> Sweeney, ‘Marcel Duchamp,’ in *Wisdom*, ed. by Nelson, p. 90.

Secondly, it is the practice of continually shocking the public that is instrumental in setting up the relationship of opposition to bourgeois society, the maintaining of the artist as a “pariah.”<sup>234</sup> This practice is necessary for the Duchampian genius as, “[i]t may be that great art can only come out of conditions of resistance, out of a state of war which forces the artist into an attitude of dedication that is almost religious and does not need the acceptance of society.”<sup>235</sup> Somewhat dramatic in their formulation, such statements can be construed less as the necessary actions of a hypothetical genius, but as justification for the more commented upon aspects of his own career: his “retirement” at the age of twenty-six, his practice of producing uncategorizable works of art, and ultimately the secret creation of *Étant Donnés* while diverting attention from the very possibility of its existence.<sup>236</sup> A more direct version of the previous statement, given on Belgian Television in 1965, is the assertion: “If there is an important fellow from now in a century or two – well! He will have hidden himself all his life in order to escape the influence of the market.”<sup>237</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, it is indubitable that this statement was a reference to his own installation, *Étant Donnés*, which, at the time of this statement, was nearing completion.

The necessity of shock to the Duchampian genius is further elaborated in his views on the commercial nature of the art market, capitulation to which Duchamp described in one interview as a “sin.”<sup>238</sup> As a self-described atheist or agnostic, this uncharacteristic use of religious terminology draws to mind concepts of eternal damnation, not in a Judaeo-Christian hell, but the damnation of eternal non-remembrance. The growth of the commercial art market was, according to Duchamp, what has caused the death of shock in contemporary society: “Today we see the complete democratization of art. Everything is accepted.”<sup>239</sup> Similarly, in 1949, he declared to interviewers, “[art] has become too popular. Art has become a thing like

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<sup>234</sup> Seitz, ‘What’s Happened to Art?’, p. 129.

<sup>235</sup> Francis Roberts, ‘I Propose to Strain the Laws of Physics,’ *Art News*, 67 (December 1968), pp. 46-47, 62-64 (p. 63).

<sup>236</sup> Sweeney, ‘Marcel Duchamp,’ in *Wisdom*, ed. by Nelson, p. 99.

<sup>237</sup> Jean Neyens, ‘Will Go Underground’, Interview of Marcel Duchamp for RTBF, 1965; transcribed in *Tout-Fait.com: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal*, trans. by Sarah Skinner Kilborne, <[http://www.toutfait.com/online\\_journal\\_details.php?postid=1440&keyword=>](http://www.toutfait.com/online_journal_details.php?postid=1440&keyword=>) [accessed 02 December 2005].

<sup>238</sup> Seitz, ‘What’s Happened to Art?’, p. 130.

<sup>239</sup> Schonberg, ‘Creator of “Nude Descending” Reflects After Half a Century,’ p. 20.

baseball. Everybody can speak of art. They may, if they want to, but has this talk any value? It has [helped to] deteriorate [art]. At least I think it has.”<sup>240</sup> Moreover, Duchamp insisted that the commercial art market was directly to blame for the corruption and destruction of potentially great men.<sup>241</sup> “[The artist] could be a great person in himself and be completely annihilated by accepting what society offers him.”<sup>242</sup>

The final requirement of the Duchampian genius was related to William Seitz in an interview for the American edition of *Vogue* in 1963. Having given one of the fullest descriptions of the pitfalls that face the modern genius, Duchamp is asked by Seitz what the young artist needs in order to avoid these perils. Duchamp’s response is that “he has to be damned intelligent to begin with, even though Cartesian intelligence is the most dangerous thing for a painter – for an artist – in general.”<sup>243</sup> This final requirement, the capacity for Cartesian reasoning, is key to understanding Duchamp’s conception of the genius. On a superficial level, through the reintroduction of innate ability, this requirement reunites the Duchampian concept of genius with the traditional use of the term. Also, the requirement of intelligence gives greater depth to the concept of the genius, heretofore set apart simply through the act of selection by posterity. Most important however, is the fact that the requirement of “Cartesian intelligence” would become the byword for Duchamp’s contribution to the art of the twentieth century. The self-professed importance of Duchamp’s own Cartesian reasoning, as well as his desire to reintroduce the mind into the appreciation of art were constant themes within the interviews of the last three decades of his life.<sup>244</sup>

Thus, in Duchamp’s formulations on the nature of genius we can see a conceptual “delay” of sorts. Most of the interviewers with whom he dealt appear to have accepted without question the validity of Duchamp’s arguments regarding the nature of the art world and the way in which the artist must engage with it without capitulating to its demands. Few, however, appear to have drawn any overt

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<sup>240</sup> Pollack, Barry, Bulliet et al., ‘Interview with Marcel Duchamp at the AIC,’ p. 97.

<sup>241</sup> Seitz, ‘What’s Happened to Art?,’ p. 130.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p. 131.



connection between these declarations and the activities that would come to characterize his life and work. The concurrence between his own life and that of his proposed genius was largely left for discovery at a later date with the publication of more concerted monographs on Duchamp's art and life. With characteristic modesty however, Duchamp insisted to those few interviewers who picked up on these references, that he was indifferent to any such considerations. With respect to Duchamp's views on the deification of artworks in museums, Richard Hamilton inquired as to how he felt about his own work being deposited in museums. Duchamp responded that he felt "The same way. I am not concerned because I don't consider myself any different from the others."<sup>245</sup> Likewise, when Dore Ashton drew upon an earlier Duchampian comment, that "there is nothing more demoralizing than success,"<sup>246</sup> to ask if he had ever felt so demoralized, Duchamp responded that he had never felt demoralized because he had "never had success. Not normal success."<sup>247</sup>

Despite the frequency with which Duchamp was interviewed in the last decade of his life, he staunchly refused to entertain the possibility that he was famous. Whenever interviewers would describe him as such he would respond with either a modest nonchalance, (e.g., "I really have no thought about that very much. I don't care whether I am or not,"<sup>248</sup>) or more energetically with declarations such as, "I know no such thing. For one thing, *les petites gens* – the grocers – don't know my name, the way most of them have heard of Dali and Picasso and even Matisse."<sup>249</sup> He insisted that any fame he had garnered was of an ephemeral and short-lived variety, claiming, "up until about ten years ago I was known as somebody who hadn't produced for a long time, a has-been."<sup>250</sup> He even confided to one interviewer that he had expected his retrospective exhibition in Pasadena, "to be another unrealised project..."<sup>251</sup> This modesty in the face of ever increasing public acclaim can, in the face of the voluminous documentary evidence to the contrary, only ring false. Yet, the persistence with which this modesty was asserted begs the question, "Why?" To

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<sup>245</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Marcel Duchamp Speaks,' in *Marcel Duchamp: the creative act* (Audio CD), ed. by Dachy (13:50).

<sup>246</sup> Seitz, 'What's Happened to Art?', p. 113.

<sup>247</sup> Ashton, 'An interview with Marcel Duchamp,' p. 246.

<sup>248</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Marcel Duchamp Speaks,' in *Marcel Duchamp: the creative act* (Audio CD), ed. by Dachy (0:36).

<sup>249</sup> Steegmuller, 'Duchamp: Fifty Years Later,' p. 29.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> *Jeu d'Echecs avec Marcel Duchamp*, Dir. Drot, (8:43).

what end did Duchamp persevere in his refusal to publicly acknowledge the state of affairs in the art world that surrounded him? Duchamp's long-time friend Henry McBride proffered a possible explanation in a brief description of Marcel's artist brothers, Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon, "both of whom we already know to be openly-avowed and willing artists (and perhaps just for that reason not half so well known as Marcel)." <sup>252</sup>

Duchamp's persistent position of modesty, his refusal to acknowledge the fame and adulation he encountered in his later life, <sup>253</sup> or express an undoubtedly present concern regarding the judgements of posterity, <sup>254</sup> may also be linked to his attitudes towards other artists who openly expressed such desires and concerns. In his interview with Pierre Cabanne, Duchamp said of his old friend and Surrealist comrade André Breton that they rarely speak any longer, "[H]e's playing the great man too much, completely clouded by the idea of posterity." <sup>255</sup> Duchamp shared a more succinct sentiment with Otto Hahn regarding similar behaviour in the early career of Duchamp's friend and fellow expatriate Edgar Varèse: "Forty years ago he was a pain in the ass." <sup>256</sup> Elaborating on this point, Duchamp explained that: "It was a colic of 'Me', always explaining ideas, which were no more than the outline of ambitions, verbally described... When he was better known, and more accepted, Varèse didn't need to explain himself so much. There's no lack of pains in the ass among artists though; Metzinger for example. And Delaunay... You couldn't meet him for more than five minutes without wanting to run away. Egomaniacs." <sup>257</sup> This unmitigated distaste for artists who express a desire for public recognition is fully in keeping with those of his views that have been outlined above. The vigorousness with which the sentiment is directed at his own friends and associates however, can be construed as a response to his own egotistical ambitions.

Thus, from his first major artistic contribution in 1913, to the posthumous release of *Étant Donnés* there is observable in Duchamp's dealings with the press, a consistent attempt to exert some manner of control over the way he and his works are

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<sup>252</sup> Henry McBride, 'Duchamps du monde,' *Art News*, 50 (11 March 1952), pp. 33-35, 61-62 (p. 33).

<sup>253</sup> Steegmuller, 'Duchamp: Fifty Years Later,' p. 29.

<sup>254</sup> Colette Roberts, 'Interview by Colette Roberts,' p. 39.

<sup>255</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 101.

<sup>256</sup> Hahn, 'Marcel Duchamp,' in *Duchamp Passim*, ed. by Hill, p. 67.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

viewed. His affability and nonchalance made him a popular subject for interviewers, yet the distance and detachment he projected enshrouded both his works and himself in a cloud of mystification which made them all the more desirable. Duchamp, the master strategist, who frequently engaged in games of chess while being interviewed, worked throughout his career to outmanoeuvre his audience.

“Walter Arensberg is quite mad. Mrs. Arensberg is mad, too.”<sup>258</sup>

### The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection

#### 3

Duchamp’s concern for the physical preservation of his artistic legacy informed not only his public statements, but also the maintenance of his oeuvre. Prior to his departure from France in the summer of 1915, Duchamp had confided to a friend his distaste for the “*vie artistique*” of groups and salons, and his desire to disassociate himself from the commercial art market.<sup>259</sup> The alternative, which Duchamp pursued almost immediately upon his arrival in the United States, was the cultivation of a select group of sympathetic patrons. These dedicated and enthusiastic collectors would not only amass and protect his work, but in doing so they ensured Duchamp an income that was steadier and less demanding than that which the open market could provide. A patron of sufficient stature could amass a collection that, as a whole, would be of such quality and size as to guarantee the avid interest of any museum. For Duchamp, the embodiment of this Renaissance ideal of benevolent patronage was undoubtedly Walter and Louise Arensberg. The Arensbergs spent more than four decades on the formation of one of the greatest private art collections of the Twentieth century, at the core of which was the work of Marcel Duchamp.

The relationship between Duchamp and the Arensbergs was by no means merely financial in nature. The shared interests and sense of humour of Walter and Duchamp led to a fast friendship that would form the basis for their ongoing business arrangements. It may well have been due to an understanding of their shared

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<sup>258</sup> Henri McBride, ‘Modern Forms: Foreword,’ *Dial*, 69 (July 1920), p. 61.

<sup>259</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 27 April 1915; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 7, pp. 35-37.

sensibilities that their mutual friend Walter Pach introduced the two men soon after Duchamp's arrival in the United States. Walter Pach was a one-time expatriate American painter who had been among the organizers of the *Armory Show*. Pach had urged Duchamp to visit New York throughout the run of the exhibition in 1913, and kept him updated on the success of his infamous *Nude*.<sup>260</sup> When Duchamp finally accepted the invitation two years later, Pach helped Duchamp find employment and arranged for Duchamp to stay in the Arensbergs' apartment while the couple was away for the summer months.<sup>261</sup> Either before the couple left town, or during a brief return trip, Pach managed to introduce Duchamp to Walter Arensberg and the two hit it off immediately.

Though the two men had never before spoken, Walter Arensberg had developed a familiarity with Duchamp's work prior to their introduction. For Arensberg, as much as for Duchamp, the *Armory Show* had been a life-changing event. In the words of one of Walter's friends, the first sight of the exhibition "hit him between wind and water,"<sup>262</sup> and by Walter's own account, he was so moved by what he discovered that he "actually forgot to go home for several days."<sup>263</sup> Hyperbole not withstanding, the *Armory Show* did materially change the course of Walter's life; instigating an unqualified addiction to modern art, and dictating the course of his remaining years.

The grandson of German immigrants to the United States and the son of a self-made steel magnate, Walter had been raised in an atmosphere of considerable wealth and privilege.<sup>264</sup> The oldest of five children, Walter never demonstrated any interest in the family business or in following in his father's industrial footsteps. Rather, the intelligent but indecisive Walter's interests lay in the arenas of poetry, cryptography and the arcane. He studied literature and poetry at Harvard University, where he

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<sup>260</sup> Letters from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 2 July 1913, 19 January 1915, 12 March 1915 & 2 April 1915; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, nos. 3, 4, 5 & 6, pp. 27-35.

<sup>261</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 143.

<sup>262</sup> Letter from William Ivins to Fiske Kimball, 15 March 1954. As quoted in Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 143. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard": A Critical Study of Louise and Walter Arensberg' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California at Santa Barbara, 1994), p. 97.

<sup>263</sup> Katherine Kuh, *The Open Eye: In Pursuit of Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 60.

<sup>264</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' pp. 13-16. For additional information on the lives of the Arensbergs, see Sawelson-Gorse's thesis.

completed an otherwise undistinguished academic career by being voted class poet by fellow members of the 1900 graduating class.<sup>265</sup>

Throughout his youth, Walter's interest in the visual arts was all but nonexistent. He hadn't taken any classes on the subject during his undergraduate years and his only concrete expression of an interest in art was a single essay written for the undergraduate magazine, *Harvard Monthly*, in which he compared da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholia I*.<sup>266</sup> Perhaps indicating a latent interest, Walter briefly and inexplicably tried his hand as an art critic in New York some years after his graduation, though he met with negligible success.<sup>267</sup>

By 1913 Walter and his wife Mary Louise Stevens, or Lou as she was known, were residing in a wealthy neighbourhood of Boston, Massachusetts, as Walter pursued his poetical aspirations. The furore surrounding the *Armory Show* exhibition in the press was so extreme that the couple opted not to wait for it to come to them. They reached the exhibition only a day or two before it closed in New York. Louise, like so many others in her place, found the work on display to be "weird & grotesque... simply frightful."<sup>268</sup> Walter, on the other hand, was deeply moved. He bought only one work on his initial visit, a lithograph by Vuillard costing twelve dollars.<sup>269</sup>

This timid initial purchase, particularly in light of his later purchasing patterns, is indicative of Walter's unease in the face of unfamiliarity. As with many intelligent people, Walter had long enjoyed the ability to evoke an air of easy authority on a wide variety of subjects. In this instance, like so many other Americans, he found himself flummoxed by the new artistic developments. Despite the fact that little if any of the work by these artists had ever been shown in the United States, Walter was

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<sup>265</sup> Among Walter's competitors for this honour was his fellow classmate Wallace Stevens. See Ibid., pp. 18-19 and Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 144.

<sup>266</sup> Walter Arensberg, 'Da Vinci's *La Gioconda* and Dürer's *Melancholia*,' *Harvard Monthly*, March 1898, pp. 23-25.

<sup>267</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' pp. 32-36.

<sup>268</sup> Postcard from Louise Arensberg to unidentified female friend, undated. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 97.

<sup>269</sup> Walter also attempted to purchase a work by Odilon Redon, but was informed that it had been sold. Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 143. According to the Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator produced by the United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics, \$12 in 1913 would have the approximate buying power of \$262.03 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

discomfited by his inability to participate in the debate surrounding this work. He was suddenly aware that he lacked the vocabulary to intellectually participate in the cultural *avant-garde*. Walter and Louise worked swiftly to rectify this intellectual deficit by placing themselves in the hands of Walter Pach. As one of the primary organizers of the exhibition, Pach was responsible for selecting most of the European works exhibited; he acted as liaison with the European artists and served as the exhibition's unofficial spokesperson. Pach visited the couple regularly during the *Armory Show*'s run in Boston, engaging in lengthy and lively discussions about the new artistic tendencies.<sup>270</sup>

The effect of Pach's instruction on the couple's confidence can be seen in their experience of the *Armory Show* in Boston. Emboldened in their artistic tastes, they returned the Vuillard lithograph purchased in New York, and instead purchased a lithograph of Cézanne's *The Bathers* (figure 3.01) and a lithograph of Gauguin's *Leda (Projet d'Assiette)*. (figure 3.02) The couple's largest purchase from the *Armory Show*, however, was Jacques Villon's oil sketch *Puteaux (Smoke and Trees in Bloom, No. 2)* (figure 3.03) which they acquired for eighty-one dollars.<sup>271</sup> Villon's painting was the last unsold work by any of the Duchamp brothers. An unsurprising and inevitable result of the couple's earlier timidity was that all the works that had incited Walter's initial interest had already been sold.

The fact that the most notorious, and by extension most desirable, of the *Armory Show* works were no longer available, had a twofold effect on the newly inspired Arensbergs. First, these works must be tracked down and acquired. The pursuit of these works would take much of the rest of Walter's life. Second, the couple realized that living in staid and conservative Massachusetts presented an obstacle to their attempts to take part in the world of *avant-garde* art. It became apparent that they must move to New York.

In New York, Walter and Louise not only continued their tutorials with Walter Pach, they also surrounded themselves with an ever wider and more varied circle of

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<sup>270</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 99.

<sup>271</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 144. \$81 in 1913 would have the approximate buying power of \$1,768.72 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

artists, poets, musicians, intellectuals and other eccentric figures. This amorphous group, which would come to be known as the “Arensberg circle,” met regularly at the couple’s apartment, with soirées that ran from nine in the evening to any and all hours of the morning.<sup>272</sup> Unlike other prominent American salons of the same period,<sup>273</sup> there was no particular focus to the gatherings at the Arensbergs’ home. As one *salonnière* would later recall, they were “a motley international band which turned night into day, conscientious objectors of all nationalities and walks of life living in an inconceivable orgy of sexual activity, jazz and alcohol.”<sup>274</sup>

It was into this atmosphere of bohemianism that Duchamp arrived in the summer of 1915. Even prior to introducing the two men, however, Walter Pach anticipated the intellectual affinity that would spring up between Duchamp and Arensberg, as well as the boon such an affluent friend could be to the impecunious Frenchman. Prior to his departure from France, Duchamp had written regularly to Walter Pach about his “*espère pouvoir éviter une vie artistique*,”<sup>275</sup> and instead find gainful employment in an unrelated field. As Duchamp explained, “*J’ai insisté auprès de vous pour ma préoccupation de gagner de l’argent pour vivre en sécurité là bas. ... Je considère que mon père a assez fait pour moi. ... Mais j’ai peur d’en arriver à avoir besoin de vendre des toiles, et un mot d’être artiste peintre.*”<sup>276</sup>

Pach, disinclined towards Duchamp’s plans of finding more traditional forms of employment,<sup>277</sup> did not manage to secure a job for Duchamp prior to his departure. Instead, Pach attempted to enlist Duchamp’s assistance in gathering material for the literary magazine, *Others*, Walter Arensberg’s pet project during the summer of 1915.<sup>278</sup> Despite Duchamp’s ambivalence about his ability to assist Arensberg “(La

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>273</sup> Most notably, those of Alfred Stieglitz and of Mabel Dodge.

<sup>274</sup> Gabriel Buffet-Picabia, ‘Some Memories of Pre-Dada: Picabia and Duchamp,’ in *The Dada Painters and Poets: an Anthology*, ed. by Robert Motherwell, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1979), p. 259.

<sup>275</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 27 April 1915; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 7, pp. 35-37.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Duchamp’s letters to Pach continually reiterate the genuineness of his desire to get some type of traditional, non-artistic job. Letters from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 2 April 1915, 27 April 1915, 21 May 1915; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, nos. 6, 7 & 8, pp. 33-38.

<sup>278</sup> Edited by Alfred Kreymborg, the magazine received its initial funding from Walter Arensberg.



*difficulté est qu'ils sont tous à la guerre*),”<sup>279</sup> he nonetheless enquired about potential entries and promised to find a Parisian contact for Walter. While this may have simply been a fortuitous introduction, it is equally likely that Pach was attempting to lay a smooth groundwork for future relations between the artist and the occasionally cantankerous collector.

Despite Duchamp's protestations that he wished to pursue more staid forms of employment, and that “*je ne veux pas entrevoir une vie d'artiste en quête de gloire et d'argent*,” he was not above arranging for works to be shipped to the more stable art market in the United States.<sup>280</sup> Duchamp's desire to avoid the artistic life did not preclude the sale of his earlier completed work, and between 1915 and 1918 he arranged to have at least nine of his earlier paintings shipped to the United States for sale in this receptive market.<sup>281</sup> Of these nine, the seven that were made available to the Arensbergs were snapped up immediately,<sup>282</sup> and those that were not immediately sold to the couple nonetheless soon found their way into the Arensbergs' growing collection.<sup>283</sup>

Pach was aware of Duchamp's concerns over the conflicting necessities of income and independence.<sup>284</sup> Rather than Duchamp's solution of non-artistic employment, Pach favoured the prospect of Duchamp garnering the dedicated support

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<sup>279</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 21 May 1915; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 8, pp. 37-38.

<sup>280</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 27 April 1915; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 7, pp. 35-37.

<sup>281</sup> The works in question were *Yvonne and Magdeline Torn in Tatters* (Sept. 1911), *Study for Portrait of Chess Players* (Oct. 1911), *Sonata* (Jan-Oct 1911), *Portrait (Dulcinea)* (Oct. 1911), *Once More to this Stair* (Nov-Dec 1911), *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 1* (Dec 1911), *The King and Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes* (April 1912), *The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes* (May 1912), and *Chocolate Grinder, No. 1* (Feb-Mar 1913). Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 163.

<sup>282</sup> According to Schwarz, Walter and Louise were the first owners of each of these works, indicating that Duchamp received the entirety of their undisclosed sale price. This is in contrast to the later sales of his work to the Arensbergs, in which Duchamp brokered the transaction, and only earned a commission.

<sup>283</sup> *Once More to this Stair* and *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 1* were the only two works not immediately purchased by the Arensbergs. *Once More to this Stair* was given by Duchamp to Frederick C. Torrey, the original owner of *Nude, No. 2*. Walter Pach, who brokered the sale of *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 1* offered the work exclusively to John Quinn, who purchased it before the Arensbergs got the opportunity. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, nos. 233 & 239, pp. 555 & 560.

<sup>284</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 27 April 1915; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 7, pp. 35-37. In this letter, Duchamp writes, “*Si vous vous rappelez nos conversations de Boulevard St. Michel et Raspail, vous verrez dans mon intention de depart la suite nécessaire de ces conversations.*”

of a benevolent, and undemanding, patron. Not only did Pach arrange contact between Walter Arensberg and Duchamp prior to Duchamp's departure from France, but Pach and Duchamp appear to have discussed rather frankly the merits of certain collectors as potential "supporters;"<sup>285</sup> specifically John Quinn. A corporate lawyer with an extensive self-made fortune, Quinn was an enthusiastic collector and supporter of modern art. As Duchamp conceded to Pach, "*Mr. Quinn, en effet, peut être pour moi un appui de cordialité.*"<sup>286</sup>

Quinn was certainly generous in his dealings with Duchamp. In the first summer of Duchamp's stay in New York, Quinn was among those that Duchamp tutored in French. After lessons, Quinn regularly took Duchamp out to dinner and the theatre.<sup>287</sup> Quinn also hired Duchamp to translate his correspondence with the French artists whose work he purchased and even pulled strings to get Duchamp a job at the French Institute doing unspecified work for four hours a day, paying \$100 per month.<sup>288</sup> On one occasion, Quinn even sent Duchamp a railroad ticket and a paid hotel reservation at a resort on the New Jersey shore because he thought Duchamp looked tired and unwell.<sup>289</sup>

Despite this exceptional generosity, Quinn was hardly the "supporter" envisioned by Duchamp. Though he did buy several works by Duchamp before his untimely death in 1924, Quinn was not suited to the unequivocal support Duchamp required in order to retain his independence. This fact, apparent throughout, was highlighted in 1919 when Frederick C. Torrey, the original owner of *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, decided to sell this notorious painting. John Quinn was the first person Pach informed of the *Nude's* availability and Torrey's asking price of \$1,000.<sup>290</sup> Quinn declined the opportunity on the grounds that Torrey was asking too much, and did not even deign to make a counteroffer. In contrast, when

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<sup>285</sup> The word used by Duchamp was "*appui*." Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 28 July 1915; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 9, pp. 40-42.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 147.

<sup>288</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to John Quinn, 4 November 1915, New York Public Library. Quoted in Tomkins, *Duchamp*, pp. 154-155. \$100 in 1915 would have the approximate buying power of \$2,140.37 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>289</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 149.

<sup>290</sup> \$1,000 in 1919 would have the approximate buying power of \$12,495.78 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

Pach offered the same information to Walter Arensberg, Arensberg jumped at the chance, paying the full asking price without question.<sup>291</sup>

The Arensbergs' support of Duchamp was as complete and unequivocal as the artist could have hoped for. In addition to Walter and Louise's unfailing eagerness to purchase any work by Duchamp that became available, Walter and Duchamp proved to be productive collaborators. Though the two men had met during the summer of 1915, the cultural implications of their association did not become apparent until the following autumn, when the couple returned to Manhattan and their soirées resumed. Duchamp not only became a regular participant in the nightly soirées, but his charm and intellectual affinity with Walter Arensberg swiftly won him the position of the salon's unofficial leader. "He became the centre of the Arensbergs' circle, and the New York intelligentsia vied for his company."<sup>292</sup>

This reference to Duchamp as the centre of the Arensberg circle is more than merely figurative. The interaction between Walter and Duchamp provided much of the motive force behind this unique moment in the development of American modernism. The two men shared a variety of interests, most notably their passions for chess and language.<sup>293</sup> Moreover, Walter found association with Duchamp, nearly ten years his junior, to be an invigorating influence. As one associate recalled, "Duchamp was the spark plug that ignited him."<sup>294</sup> This invigoration led not only to the "second childhood" typified by the group's notorious debauchery, but also to an increase in Walter's poetic output.

The poems that Walter produced during this period show evidence of Duchamp's influence; melding one of Walter's passions, an interest in multi-layered systems and cryptography, with Duchamp's fascination with puns and the sonorous linguistic slippage of puns.<sup>295</sup> Walter's poem "Ing," for example, includes the

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<sup>291</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 148.

<sup>292</sup> Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, p. 38.

<sup>293</sup> While an undergraduate at Harvard University, Walter's extracurricular activities had included membership in the Chess Club, of which he was elected Vice President. Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 17.

<sup>294</sup> Kuh, *The Open Eye*, p. 62.

<sup>295</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the influence of Duchamp on Walter Arensberg's poetry, see Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' pp. 143-179.

alliterative and homophonous passage: "...a value for soap/so present to/sew pieces./And *p* says: Peace is;”<sup>296</sup> so redolent of Duchamp’s own notorious wordplay. The fertility of this interaction was reciprocal as well; Walter’s fascination with cryptography and keys is manifested in Duchamp’s Dadaist exercise, *The*.<sup>297</sup> (figure 3.04) In a thoroughly Duchampian fashion, the key “*remplacer chaque ★ par le mot: the*” not only fails to solve the nonsense text, but manages to add to the obfuscation.

The clearest incarnation of the intellectual affinity between Walter and Duchamp, however, was their collaboration on many of the readymades created during this period. On the simplest level, the readymades created following Duchamp’s arrival in New York begin to show a literary or documentary element. The augmentation of the dissociative indifference of the readymade with the addition of titular text on *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, was one of the first indications of the effects of Duchamp’s discussions with Walter. (figure 3.05) This fascination with the textual also led Duchamp to retroactively make the *Bottlerack* into a ““*Readymade., à distance*” through the addition of an inscription, which has since been lost.<sup>298</sup> (figure 3.06) Duchamp continued to intertwine textual elements into the readymades, producing textually driven works such as 1915’s handwritten *The*, the typewritten *Fania (Profile)* of 1916, (figure 3.07) and the unsent postcards that comprise *Rendez-vous du Dimanche 6 Février 1916....*<sup>299</sup> (figure 3.08)

In addition to the comparative tenuousness surrounding questions of influence, Walter also physically assisted Duchamp in the creation and defence of several readymades. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, in her biography of Walter and Louise Arensberg, has identified the text on the edge of the readymade, *Comb*, as having

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<sup>296</sup> Walter Conrad Arensberg, ‘Ing,’ in *The New Anthology of American Poetry: Modernisms 1900-1950*, ed. by Stephen Gould Axelrod, Camille Roman and Thomas Travisano, (Rutgers University Press, 2003) p. 521.

<sup>297</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 334, p. 638. Sawelson-Gorse, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s “Silent Guard”,’ p. 159.

<sup>298</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Suzanne Crotti, 15 January 1916; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 11, p. 43. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 306, p. 615. Schwarz dates the *Bottlerack* to its purchase by Duchamp during 1914, despite Duchamp’s 1916 claim that ‘*J’en fait un “Readymade., à distance”*.’

<sup>299</sup> Despite being almost entirely textual, these items are conceptually distinct from Duchamp’s puns, as they are phonetically non-repetitious, and pointedly nonsensical.

been written by Walter.<sup>300</sup> (figure 3.09) A far better known collaborative readymade followed soon after the *Comb*, the mysterious *With Hidden Noise*, which was created only a few months later in 1916. (figure 3.10) This work comprises a hollow ball of twine, of the sort available in hardware stores, fastened tightly between two square brass plates that are themselves joined by two 4 ½ inch screws.<sup>301</sup> The name of this work, as Duchamp would later recall, is derived from the fact that,

[b]efore I finished it, Arensberg put something inside the ball of twine. He never told me what it was. I didn't want to know. It was a sort of secret and it makes a noise. We called this a ready-made with a secret noise. Listen to it. I never know, I don't know, I will never know whether it is a diamond or a coin.<sup>302</sup>

The mysterious contents of the readymade were not the only contribution made by Walter Arensberg. The cryptographic puzzle of *The* was repeated on the base of *With Hidden Noise*, though in this instance, the key to the nonsensical solution was not offered.

The most important creative collaboration between Walter and Duchamp, however, was that surrounding the submission of the urinal, *Fountain*, to the first exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917. (figure 3.11) The goal of the organization, which had come into being in the closing months of 1916, was to recapture the vigour of the *Armory Show*, the last large-scale exhibition of Modern Art in America. The Arensberg circle was a powerful presence in the organization's board of directors; Walter, himself, took on the mantle of managing director for the Society's first exhibition, and Duchamp headed the Society's hanging committee.<sup>303</sup> The Society of Independent Artists was modelled on the French *Salon des Indépendants*, including borrowing the society's oft repeated motto: "no jury, no prizes."<sup>304</sup> According to the rules of the Society, "all members would be provided

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<sup>300</sup> Naomi Sawelson-Gorse has also identified that, prior to its transubstantiation as a readymade, *Comb* was a dog comb for the Arensbergs' two wire-haired terriers. Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 144. Molly Nesbitt and Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, 'The Concept of Nothing: New Notes by Marcel Duchamp and Walter Arensberg,' in *The Duchamp Effect*, ed. by Martha Buskirk & Mignon Nixon, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 151-152.

<sup>301</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 340, pp. 644-645.

<sup>302</sup> Sweeney, 'Marcel Duchamp,' in *Wisdom*, ed. by Nelson, p. 95.

<sup>303</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 180.

<sup>304</sup> Anonymous, 'An Attempt to Abolish Juries and Prizes for Works of Art,' *Current Opinion*, March 1917, p. 6. Anon., 'Society of Independents Exhibit their Paintings,' p. 7.

with sufficient space to hang two pictures,” and the only requirements for membership were “the payment of an initiation fee of \$1 and the annual dues of \$5.”<sup>305</sup>

This exercise in what John Quinn, acting as the Society’s legal representative, described as “Democracy run riot,”<sup>306</sup> was exacerbated by Duchamp’s equally notorious hanging system. A source of much consternation in the contemporary press<sup>307</sup> and the reason for the resignation of at least one board member,<sup>308</sup> this system entailed disregarding style or influence, and instead hanging the works alphabetically by the artist’s surname. Care was taken, even under the alphabetical hanging system, to ensure that no one was unduly favoured; thus the alphabetical progression of names was to begin with a letter chosen randomly from a hat.<sup>309</sup>

One cannot help but recall, with the replication of the *Indépendants* structure, Duchamp’s own experience at the 1912 *Salon des Indépendants*. With this experience in mind, Duchamp’s abolition of thematic hanging in favour of a more arbitrary alphabetical one appears not merely a chaotic Dadaist gesture. Rather, the alphabetical hanging precludes the possibility of unofficial censorship occurring within a thematic hanging group, much as the Puteaux cubists had done at the 1912 *Indépendants*. Even with this safeguard in place, Duchamp had grown cynical about the ability of such groups, in either their French or American incarnations, to honour their lofty egalitarian goals.

It was with these concerns in mind that Walter and Duchamp, along with the American Futurist painter Joseph Stella, visited the J. L. Mott Iron Works to purchase the readymade *Fountain*.<sup>310</sup> When the urinal arrived at the Grand Central Palace, signed R. Mutt and accompanied by Mr. Mutt’s initiation and membership fees, the

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<sup>305</sup> Anon., ‘An Attempt to Abolish Juries,’ p. 6. The combined cost of \$6 in 1915 would have the approximate buying power of \$128.51 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>306</sup> John Quinn, draft of a circular for the Society of Independents, n.d. Quoted in Steven Watson, *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant Garde* (New York: Abbeville, 1991), p. 312.

<sup>307</sup> Anon., ‘An Attempt to Abolish Juries,’ p. 6. Anon., ‘Society of Independents Exhibit their Paintings,’ p. 7.

<sup>308</sup> Robert Henri, leader of the American Ashcan School, resigned over this point. Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 180.

<sup>309</sup> The letter chosen was ‘R.’ See Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

results were exactly as Duchamp anticipated. Many on the Society's board balked at the prospect of exhibiting the object. Board member and fellow collaborator, Beatrice Wood, recalled the following exchange between the American painter and Society board member George Bellows, and Walter:

"We cannot exhibit it," Bellows said hotly, taking out a handkerchief and wiping his forehead.

"We cannot refuse it, the entrance fee has been paid," gently answered Walter.

"It is indecent!" roared Bellows.

"That depends upon the point of view," added Walter, suppressing a grin.

"Someone must have sent it in as a joke. It is signed R. Mutt; sounds fishy to me," grumbled Bellows with disgust. Walter approached the object in question and touched its glossy surface. Then with the dignity of a don addressing men at Harvard, he expounded: "A lovely form has been revealed, freed from its functional purpose, therefore a man has clearly made an aesthetic contribution."

...Bellows stepped away, then returned in a rage as if he were going to pull it down. "We can't show it, that's all there is to it,"

Walter lightly touched his arm. "This is what the whole exhibit is about; an opportunity to allow the artist to send in anything he chooses, for the artist to decide what is art, not someone else."

Bellows shook his arm away, protesting. "You mean to say, if a man sent in horse manure glued to a canvas that we would have to accept it!"

"I'm afraid we would," said Walter, with a touch of undertaker's sadness.<sup>311</sup>

The debate surrounding the object continued until one hour before the public opening of the exhibition, when the *Fountain*, like the *Nude* before it, was officially rejected by a majority of the board members. Both Walter and Duchamp resigned their positions in protest of the Society's decision. The decision of the Society's board however, could not have been a surprise; the choice of a urinal was calculated

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<sup>311</sup> Beatrice Wood, *I Shock Myself: The Autobiography of Beatrice Wood*, ed. by Lindsay Smith (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1985), p. 29.

to shock. At no point in the press coverage of the *Fountain*'s exclusion did any critic feel sufficiently comfortable to employ even the word "urinal." Within one review of the exhibition in *The New York Times*, *Fountain* was elliptically referred to as "one number [that] was withdrawn, it not being believed that even a broadminded public would stand for it as representing true art for art's sake."<sup>312</sup> Similarly, Duchamp and his associates, in the several articles defending *Fountain* within their publication *The Blind Man*, did not dare reference the nature of the object in question in more detail than to call it a "plumber's porcelain."<sup>313</sup> Such reticence only belies their protestations of innocence.

The initial significance of the *Fountain* was the shock and subversion involved in the act of its submission. Thus, Walter's collaboration in the work was nearly as vital to its success as Duchamp's. Walter was not merely involved in the Duchampian act of artistic designation; he also played an intrinsic role in the attendant pageantry. His eloquent defence of Mr. Mutt's right to have his *Fountain* exhibited deflected attention from Duchamp. Likewise, Walter's resignation was intended, however unsuccessfully, to add to the publicity surrounding the gesture.<sup>314</sup> It is even likely that Walter, involved as he was in every other aspect of the *Fountain*, provided the financial support for the printing of the magazine *The Blind Man*. Though less intimate than his participation in the creation of earlier readymades, Walter's collaboration with Duchamp in the creation of *Fountain* was more crucial to the success of the piece, and thus was more enduring in its impact.

Duchamp's willingness to accept Walter's collaboration was particularly indicative of the genuine friendship that underlay the relationship between the two men. Walter's assistance was always just that; no demands were made of Duchamp regarding the nature, quantity or frequency of the resulting works, though he did acquire them at every opportunity. The pinnacle of this idealized notion of patronage occurred in the autumn of 1916, when Jean Crotti and Yvonne Chastel returned to France, leaving Duchamp the only tenant in their shared flat. Walter magnanimously

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<sup>312</sup> Anonymous, 'Independent Artists Exhibition Opens Saturday with 1,800 Pictures by Society's Members,' *The New York Times*, 14 April 1918, p. 22.

<sup>313</sup> Louise Norton, 'Buddha of the Bathroom,' *Blindman*, no. 2, 1917, pp. 5-6.

<sup>314</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Suzanne Duchamp, 11 April 1917; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 15, p. 47. Duchamp wrote his sister that he expected the resignations to 'c'est un potin qui aura sa valeur dans New York.'



offered to cover the rent on a studio for Duchamp in the same building as the Arensbergs' own apartment.<sup>315</sup> In exchange for the \$58.33 per month rent,<sup>316</sup> Duchamp agreed to give the *Large Glass* to the Arensbergs, whenever it was completed. (figure 3.12)

This was, throughout their decades-long association, the only instance in which Walter ever imposed contingent obligations on Duchamp regarding a work in progress. Walter understood that there were strict limits on the demands he could make on his friend; he could not impinge in any way upon Duchamp's treasured freedom. Walter did not and could not expect regular progress on the *Glass*, and Duchamp would go for weeks at a time without discernible advances. As he would later recall, "[the *Large Glass*] interested me but not enough to make me *eager* to finish it.... I didn't have any intention to show it or sell it at that time, I was just doing it, that was my life. And when I wanted to work on it I did, and other times I would go out and enjoy America."<sup>317</sup> The future purchase of this work could not and did not alter this relationship with his project. The Arensbergs' only expectation was eventual possession of the *Large Glass*.

Much as Walter understood that he was not to make demands that impinged upon Duchamp's artistic freedom, Duchamp understood that Walter's support was not without its own price. What Walter wanted, more fundamentally even than ownership of the *Large Glass*, was access to Duchamp. Walter wanted the prestige of Duchamp's company, of being associated with the creator of the infamous *Nude*. He wanted entry into the heart of the New York *avant-garde* and an advisor who would guide him through it. Moreover, Walter wanted to be recognized part of that *avant-garde*, as having the intelligence and understanding required to participate in the dialogues that defined this sub-culture.

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<sup>315</sup> The building in which the Arensbergs resided at 33 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street had a unique combination of large residential apartments with artists' studios built alongside. Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' pp. 96-128.

<sup>316</sup> Francis M. Naumann, 'Affectusement, Marcel: Ten Letters from Marcel Duchamp to Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti,' *Archives of American Art Journal*, 22 (1982), pp. 2-19 (p.18, fn. 14). \$58.33 in 1916 would have the approximate buying power of \$1,156.84 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>317</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 155. Tomkins's italics.

All of this he found in Duchamp. More importantly though, Walter had found someone with a vested interest in the growth and success of the couple's burgeoning art collection. By 1918 the couple already owned at least fourteen of Duchamp's works.<sup>318</sup> Though barely more than a quarter of the number they would amass by the end of their lives, Walter and Louise had already made a sizeable investment in Duchamp's career. Thus, in his role as the couple's advisor in artistic matters, a role he had taken over from Walter Pach, Duchamp was guided by a spirit of self-preservation. His own career and legacy would become ever more inextricably linked with the Arensbergs' collection, interests that would bind the two parties for life.

## California

Among the most salient sustaining elements of the Arensberg salon was its air of escapism. In spite of being peopled predominantly by expatriates and émigrés, the war was perceptibly distant. Though by no means apolitical,<sup>319</sup> the group nonetheless took advantage of the physical and political isolation that the United States offered. As Beatrice Wood later recalled, "the war was never discussed, the only battles that occupied us were the ones against traditional values."<sup>320</sup> All of that began to change in the spring of 1917, however, when the United States declared war on Germany. Inexplicably, none of the Americans in the Arensberg circle were chosen for conscription.<sup>321</sup> Of the group, the one who felt the effects of American intervention most strongly was Duchamp.

Duchamp's "F" designation meant that he was now forbidden to leave the United States without "official permission."<sup>322</sup> In addition to his American obligations, Duchamp was interviewed by the French government, and soon found

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<sup>318</sup> As of the end of 1918, the Arensbergs owned the following works by Duchamp: *Portrait (Dulcinea)* (1911), *Yvonne and Magdelaine Torn in Tatters* (1911), *Study for Portrait of Chess Players* (1911), *Sonata* (1911), *Chocolate Grinder, No. 1* (1913), the *Box of 1914*, *The* (1915), *Rendez-vous du Dimanche 6 Février 1916*, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 3* (1916), *Fania (Profile)* (1916), *Comb* (1916), *With Hidden Noise* (1916), *Apolinère Enameled* (1917), *Recette (Recipe)* (1918), as well as the as yet incomplete *Large Glass*.

<sup>319</sup> The political activities of the Dadaists in New York are discussed in detail in Michael R. Taylor, 'New York,' in *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris*, ed. by Leah Dickerman (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2006.), pp. 277-299.

<sup>320</sup> Wood, *I Shock Myself*, p. 28.

<sup>321</sup> The Selective Service Act of 1917 was passed by the United States Congress in May 1917. Matthew S. Witkovsky, 'Chronology,' in *Dada*, ed. by Dickerman, pp. 416-459 (pp. 430-31).

<sup>322</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 59.

himself employed by the French war mission as the personal secretary to a captain.<sup>323</sup> Duchamp, who had left France “for lack of patriotism,” soon found American patriotism even worse.<sup>324</sup> To escape, Duchamp acquired the necessary permissions to leave the United States for Buenos Aires, finally departing in August of 1918.

By the time he had left, Duchamp’s relationship with the Arensbergs had started to become strained. Writing a friend about his impending departure, he explained that there were “*Plusieurs raisons que tu connais : Rien de grave : seulement une sorte de fatigue de la part des A. \_ Des gens malintentionnés ont probablement arrangé les choses ainsi \_*”<sup>325</sup> Though Duchamp never clarified the inferences or the source of the difficulty between himself and Walter, one potential source was the increasing interest Duchamp was receiving from another potential patron, Katherine Dreier.<sup>326</sup> Through much persistent effort and force of personality, Dreier had managed to induce Duchamp to create a painting for her apartment. This work, *Tu m’* would prove to be Duchamp’s last traditional oil on canvas, and was likely a point of contention for Walter. (figure 3.13) Presumably in deference to Duchamp’s principles regarding artistic freedom, there is no evidence that Walter had ever attempted to commission anything from the artist. Having had to make due with buying completed works as and when they became available, Duchamp’s creation of *Tu m’* for a potential competitor must have bruised Walter’s ego.

On top of this, the Arensbergs were having their own share of trouble. Walter’s mother died during the summer of 1918. Her death came as a severe blow to Walter, causing him to withdraw from the social activities of the group. Walter sought solace, in part, in a passion from his undergraduate days, the studies of Dante and cryptography.<sup>327</sup> His pseudo-academic immersion grew even deeper in 1920,

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<sup>323</sup> Letter from Duchamp to Carrie, Ettie and Florine Stettheimer, 8 October 1917; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 18, p. 52.

<sup>324</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 59.

<sup>325</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Jean Crotti, 8 July 1918; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 19, p. 53. Duchamp’s underlining. The use of “extended periods at ground level” was a frequently employed idiosyncrasy of Duchamp’s letter writing; a fungible punctuation that can correspond to the use of either a period or comma. See Hector Obalk, ‘Transcription policy,’ in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, pp. 16-19 (p. 17). Following Obalk’s lead, I have opted to employ the single-space underline as the most accurate transcription of Duchamp’s punctuation.

<sup>326</sup> More will be said about Duchamp’s relationship with Katherine Dreier in the next chapter.

<sup>327</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s “Silent Guard”,’ p. 177.

following the sudden death of his close friend, the psychologist Elmer Ernest Southard.<sup>328</sup> Walter's withdrawal led to the publication of his *Cryptography of Dante* in 1921, but his nearly obsessive work on the tome put an end both to the couple's salons and to Walter's attempts at poetry.<sup>329</sup>

Moreover, the couple's finances were in a dire position. Walter's obsessive acquisition of art, combined with his disinclination to negotiate on prices, had put a substantial dent in the couple's bank balance. So too had the nightly parties that the couple had hosted for nearly two years. The most substantial dent in the couple's finances, however, was that created by a series of generous and unrepaid loans that Walter had made over the years. These included investments in genuine, if misguided, endeavours including loans of over \$100,000 to Marius DeZayas and his backers to fund the operations of the DeZayas Gallery, and an undisclosed amount spent financing a feature film.<sup>330</sup> Not only were debtors such as DeZayas and his backers unable to repay their loans, Walter also, rather naively, often loaned money to individuals who had no apparent intention to repay.<sup>331</sup>

Walter's freedom with money, along with his years of alcoholic debauchery and philandering ways had unsurprisingly also placed a substantial strain on his marriage to Louise. Her conservative New England upbringing left her ill suited to join in the free-wheeling ways of her husband's circle of friends. As the poetess Mina Loy recalled, Lou "could not acquire the knack of misbehaving, so always felt wistfully out of it."<sup>332</sup> While this was a fair assessment of Lou's relationship with the couple's New York lifestyle, privately she was not as prim as many in the circle believed. In the summer of 1917 she had begun a passionate and long term affair with

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., p. 177. Naomi Sawelson Gorse has observed that 'He would never again publish poems. He would never again list his occupation as a poet.'

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., p. 201. Naumann, 'Affectusement, Marcel,' p. 18, fn. 25. The feature film in question was likely *Layfayette, We Come*, in which Duchamp had a role as an extra. \$100,000 in 1921 would have the approximate buying power of \$1,207, 692.74 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>331</sup> Beatrice Wood recounted that her first husband, whom she described as having "the bearing of a gambler, not a gentleman," and whom married largely to escape her domineering mother, had borrowed \$4,000 from Walter without her knowledge, and which he never repaid. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, pp. 38-42. \$4,000 in 1920 would have the approximate buying power of \$43,235.40 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>332</sup> Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Mina Loy: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1996), p. 215. Quoted in Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 178.

Duchamp's friend Henri-Pierre Roché.<sup>333</sup> That their affair remained a secret was essential for, though Walter openly discussed his infidelities, even in front of Lou, he would not tolerate similar behaviour from his wife.<sup>334</sup>

All of these pressures came to a head by the end of 1919. Louise presented Walter with an ultimatum; she threatened to leave him unless they left New York for the west coast.<sup>335</sup> Walter acquiesced. Though their departure was repeatedly put off, they eventually found themselves in California in the spring of 1921.<sup>336</sup> The Arensbergs' commitment to the west coast was not without its own price. It was decided that the jewel of their collection, the *Large Glass*, was too fragile to survive the transcontinental journey.<sup>337</sup> Katherine Dreier, recently enamoured of Duchamp and eager to catch up with the Arensbergs' collection, purchased the *Large Glass* from the couple for \$2,000. John Quinn likewise took advantage of the couple's financial situation to acquire from them Brancusi's *Nouveau Né*.<sup>338</sup> (figure 3.14)

Duchamp had the opportunity to reunite with the Arensbergs before they moved to California. Bearing the readymade *50cc of Paris Air* (figure 3.15) as a souvenir for his friend, Duchamp met up with the Arensbergs again when he returned to New York in 1920. As he wrote his sister Suzanne, "*Walter va bien travaille [sic] comme un fou à son Dante qui menace de n'être jamais fini\_ J'y vais moins souvent qu'autrefois. Moins ou pas de réunions comme celles célèbres.\_*"<sup>339</sup> While Duchamp and Walter remained friends, the Saturnalian days of the "Arensberg Salon" had finished.

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<sup>333</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, pp. 196-197.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., p. 197. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>335</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 199.

<sup>336</sup> Naomi Sawelson-Gorse's research identifies the couple's arrival in California as occurring in May 1921. Ibid., p. 226, fn. 16.

<sup>337</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Katherine Dreier, 16 August 1923. YCAL MSS 101, Box 2, Folder 56. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>338</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 23 May 1930. Box 6, Folder 21, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse has suggested that Walter and Louise also sold a "portrait by Rousseau" to Quinn (Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 209). Since the work was never mentioned in Walter's correspondence with Duchamp, the title and subject of the work are unknown, and Walter never made any attempt to reacquire this work, I am disinclined to consider it.

<sup>339</sup> Letter from Duchamp to Jean Crotti and Suzanne Duchamp, 20 October 1920; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 35, pp. 91-95. Duchamp's underlining.

Much to Duchamp's surprise, the Arensbergs found life in California to be largely congenial.<sup>340</sup> Walter was able to throw himself into his cryptographic studies and was able to publish seven more books and pamphlets in the years that followed.<sup>341</sup> Following the completion of his work on Dante, Walter returned to yet another passion from his undergraduate days, the Bacon/Shakespeare controversy. Walter's convictions were not limited to the thesis that Sir Francis Bacon wrote the works attributed to Shakespeare. Soon after the couple's arrival in California Walter confided to a friend that he had discovered "nothing less than the complete cryptographic method by which Francis Bacon signed the Shakespeare plays and poems."<sup>342</sup> This "cryptographic method" involved clues, generally in the form of complicated and abstruse acrostics and anagrams, within the original printed copies that would inform the attentive reader of the author, Shakespeare's, true identity. Proving this hypothesis would become an all-consuming passion in Walter's life, second only to his art collection.

The only thing that either Walter or Louise found to be lacking in their new life, was culture. Having so long enjoyed the cultural centres of Europe and New York City, the couple found the almost complete lack of interest in art to be deeply disconcerting.<sup>343</sup> There were few interested in collecting art, almost no art dealers and no art museum to speak of. This served the couple well at first, as their finances had initially led the couple to consider selling more than the two works they had ultimately parted with.<sup>344</sup> By the 1930s however, the couple had not only weathered their financial difficulties, but had regained the financial status that had marked their early years.<sup>345</sup> Having weathered the hardships, the couple were still not in a position

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<sup>340</sup> 'Que pouvez vous faire pendant 24 heures tous les jours en Californie. La nature doit se répéter bien souvent.' Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 15 November 1921; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 42, pp. 102-103.

<sup>341</sup> Following the publication of *The Cryptography of Dante* in 1921, Walter published the *Cryptography of Shakespeare, Part 1*, in 1922; *Secret Grave of Francis Bacon at Lichfield*, in 1923; *Burial of Francis Bacon and his Mother at Lichfield Chapter House*, in 1924; *Baconian Keys*, in 1928; *The Shakespearian Mystery*, in 1928; *Francis Bacon, William Butts and the Pagets of Beaudesert*, in 1929 and the *Magic Ring of Francis Bacon*, in 1930.

<sup>342</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Sophie Treadwell, 2 September 1922. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 204.

<sup>343</sup> More will be said about the cultural situation in California in chapter five.

<sup>344</sup> Letter from Louise Arensberg to Sophie Treadwell, 20 October [1921]. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 207.

<sup>345</sup> This revitalization of wealth largely came through inheritances following the death of Walter's father in 1924 and one of Lou's aunts in 1925. Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 212.

to expand their collection for a number of years. When they finally felt financially secure again, they came to Duchamp.

Correspondence between the Arensbergs and Duchamp had dwindled, and appears to have died off for nearly a decade.<sup>346</sup> When it resumed, in the spring of 1930, Walter had also just begun to resume his collecting. “Would it interest you to hear that Mrs. Eddy has just agreed to sell us your Chess Players?” (figure 1.06) he asked Duchamp before enlisting the artist’s assistance in reacquiring the *Nouveau Né*, which the couple had been forced to relinquish “at a time when we were in financial difficulties.”<sup>347</sup> Not only did they wish to undo this act of financial desperation, the Arensbergs wanted to make up for lost time. Walter pleaded at the letter’s close that Duchamp, “let us know if you have been doing any more painting or work on glass. If so, for auld lang syne, please give us the opportunity to purchase whatever you think is the best among your recent things.”<sup>348</sup>

This letter marks a change of tone in the Arensbergs’ relationship with Duchamp. Though both cherished the memories of their time in New York together, the realities of time and distance had taken their toll. Rather than discussing the intricacies of their lives and interests, the dialogue between the two men was dominated by business. Duchamp had fallen easily back into his role as the Arensbergs’ emissary to the *avant-garde*. Walter still trusted Duchamp’s judgement implicitly, purchasing works through Duchamp on the basis of little more than a photograph or written description by Duchamp.<sup>349</sup> Further evidence of the couple’s blanket trust in Duchamp’s taste included instructions to “[keep] on the look out for a

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<sup>346</sup> While it is known that not all correspondence between the two parties survives, after Duchamp’s letter to Walter and Louise of 15 November 1921, the next known communication between the two is a letter from Walter to Duchamp, dated 23 May 1930. Box 6, Folders 20 & 21, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>347</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 23 May 1930. Box 6, Folder 21, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Letters from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 28 June 1932, 15 August 1932, 3 September 1932 (Box 6, Folder 22). Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 15 March 1933 (Box 6, Folder 23). Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 1 September 1935 (Box 6, Folder 25). All in the Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

Picasso,”<sup>350</sup> and to purchase on their behalf “if you ever find a good, early Matisse for a really low price.”<sup>351</sup>

The Arensbergs’ most pressing concern, though, was acquiring those works by Duchamp that they felt still eluded them. In addition to the *Chess Players*, Walter repeatedly enjoined Duchamp to assist in wooing his *Bride* (figure 3.16) away from its then owner, André Breton.<sup>352</sup> “We admire it immensely, and should like to see it among the other paintings we have of yours,”<sup>353</sup> adding only a few months later: “Don’t forget to follow up the matter of the *Mariée* whenever the occasion presents.” They also eagerly bought up the readymade *Why Not Sneeze, Rose Sélavy?*, when both Katherine Dreier and her sister Mary, who had commissioned the work, found it to be unpalatable.<sup>354</sup> (figure 2.05)

As their art collection resumed its growth, it began to take on a new meaning for the couple. Their collection had remained in storage for most of the 1920s as the couple lived in a series of rented homes. Having finally settled in their ample home in the Hollywood Hills, the couple were again able to display their equally ample collection. After the long break, the chance to display their collection was an invigorating experience, they even went to the extent of having an entrance foyer designed around the display of their Brancusi sculptures.<sup>355</sup> (figure 3.17) This rediscovery allowed the couple to explore the interrelationships between the various modern and pre-Columbian works that made up their collection, leading them to view the collection as an organic whole. Moreover, as Walter explained to Duchamp, “There isn’t a day that I don’t pass some time with your pictures. They are your conversation.”<sup>356</sup> In the comparative cultural isolation of Hollywood in the 1930s

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<sup>350</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Duchamp, 15 August 1932, Box 6, Folder 22, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>351</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Duchamp, 13 August 1932, Box 6, Folder 22, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>352</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Duchamp, 28 June 1932, Box 6, Folder 22, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Duchamp, 27 October 1937, Box 6, Folder 26, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>355</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s “Silent Guard”,’ pp. 214-215.

<sup>356</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Duchamp, 23 May 1930. Box 6, Folder 21, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.



their art collection had become both a recollection of their past lives, and an extension of themselves.

With the Arensbergs' collection of his work to keep the conversation alive, the two men fell easily back into their old friendship when, in 1936, Duchamp made his first trip to California. As Walter would later observe, "Seeing you after the lapse of years... the intervening time simply didn't count."<sup>357</sup> Having spent most of the previous decade in France, Duchamp had consented to travel to the United States for an array of reasons. His other dominant collector, Katherine Dreier had been urging him to return to the United States in order to mend the *Large Glass*, which had shattered while being transported in a van three years previously. Also, Duchamp had begun to work on a new project, his *Boîte-en-Valise*. (figure 5.36) Effectively a portable museum, the creation of this work required gathering photographs and detailed notes about the colour and appearance of the vast majority of his known output. His work and the desire to reunite with his old friends were among the factors that finally drew Duchamp to California.

While in California, Walter and Louise arranged parties and dinners for Duchamp to attend, and even arranged for him to take a tour of the Twentieth-Century Fox Studios.<sup>358</sup> All was not reunion and sight-seeing though. In addition to the resurrection of the debates from their heady salon days, we can safely assume that more urgent questions were also discussed. The Arensbergs' health was starting to fail. Walter was suffering from debilitating sinusitis, and Louise was beset by health problems stemming from an as yet undiagnosed terminal cancer.<sup>359</sup> Having no children or heirs, the Arensbergs had begun to consider the long term fate of their legacy: namely, their art collection and Walter's Baconian research. This was a particularly pressing concern as the art collection had grown by leaps and bounds in the wilds of California, containing more than 600 works by the 1930s.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Duchamp, 11 May 1949. Box 6, Folder 31, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>358</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 307. Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 239. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, 'Hollywood Conversations: Duchamp and the Arensbergs,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Bonnie Clearwater (Miami Beach: Grassfield Press, 1991), pp. 25-45 (p. 30).

<sup>359</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 258.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

There is no evidence of the content of the conversations between Walter, Louise and Duchamp during their reunion in 1936, and the discussions resulted in no concrete plans. We can, however, infer the content of their conversation from the comparative flurry of activity that this visit preceded. Katherine Dreier, visits with whom buffered Duchamp's trip west and with whom similar conversations certainly took place, took advantage of Duchamp's visit to create the Société Anonyme as the official legal owner of the majority of the work in her care. The Arensbergs did likewise in the following year, by creating the Francis Bacon Foundation.<sup>361</sup>

The creation of the Francis Bacon Foundation, incorporated by the state of California on 9 April 1937, presented two parallel benefits for the couple. First, it transferred ownership of their vast and ever growing collection to a tax-exempt, non-profit organization. Secondly, it provided the structure whereby Walter's research on Francis Bacon could be continued in perpetuity. Though Walter had not translated his Baconian research into a published work since 1930, nor would he, he still maintained a staff of three full-time research assistants. Working "like human computers,"<sup>362</sup> these three women toiled in a section of the upper floor of the house entirely given over to Walter's research and calculations. Even during the height of the Great Depression of the 1930's Walter was rumoured to spend \$10,000 per year on his research project.<sup>363</sup>

Despite the near necessity for Duchamp's involvement in the completion of the Arensbergs' plans for their collection, Duchamp was not made an initial trustee of the Francis Bacon Foundation, as he had been with Katherine Dreier's Société Anonyme collection. This was likely due to Walter's endemic indecisiveness. As much as Dreier was a woman of action, Walter was a ditherer and in administrative matters he was inclined to become distracted by his research or other interests.<sup>364</sup> By

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<sup>361</sup> Francis Bacon Foundation, Articles of Incorporation of the State of California, 9 April 1937. Box 5, Folder 1, Francis Bacon Foundation Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>362</sup> Kuh, *The Open Eye*, p. 59.

<sup>363</sup> Letter from Galka Scheyer to Wassily Kandinsky, 20 April 1930. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 248. \$10,000 in 1930 would have the approximate buying power of \$129,447.31 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>364</sup> This lack of focus had been noted by his high school instructors as a lack of discipline, and manifested itself repeatedly throughout his adult life. Examples include his failure to complete his post-graduate studies, the numerous plans he concocted during the salon years that were never taken

the time the articles of incorporation had been drafted and signed, Duchamp had long since returned to France.

Even without a trusteeship in the couple's non-profit organization, it soon became clear that Duchamp had thrown in his lot with the Arensbergs. Their extensive art collection already contained excellent examples of work by some of the most important artists of the early twentieth century, as well as the "masterpieces of the crucial years 1910-1914"<sup>365</sup> Also, unlike Dreier; by the mid 1930s the Arensbergs were flourishing financially, and were looking to expand their collection. As the couple came ever more to see the collection as their visible legacy and the route to their own immortality, they worked to make this collection as complete as possible a testament to their discretion as collectors. Finally, forming the undeniable core of this impressive collection was the largest single accumulation of Duchamp's own work. The fates of the Arensbergs and Duchamp had become interdependent.

Almost immediately upon his return to France, Duchamp began working to bolster both the Arensbergs' collection as a whole and his own presence therein. In the years following Duchamp's departure for Buenos Aires the Arensbergs had sought out and acquired those works that had eluded them at the *Armory Show*. This included acquiring the infamous *Nude, No. 2*,<sup>366</sup> (figure 1.01) as well as purchasing *The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes* (figure 1.05) and the *Portrait of Chess Players* (figure 1.06) from the estate of fellow collector, Arthur Jerome Eddy. The couple would buy as many works in the three years following their meeting in 1936 as they had in the eighteen since they had last seen Duchamp.

Those of Duchamp's works purchased by the couple in the concluding years of the 1930s were of a consistently high quality and significance. These included the first work on glass that the couple owned since the sale of the *Large Glass*, the semi-circular *Glider Containing a Water Mill in Neighbouring Metals*, which Duchamp

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forward, and soon became the overarching theme of the couple's negotiations with the potential recipients of their collection.

<sup>365</sup> Fiske Kimball, 'Foreword,' in *Arensberg Collection: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Section* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1954), n.p.

<sup>366</sup> *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* was acquired in 1919 from Frederick C. Torrey through Walter Pach. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 242, pp. 562-563.

persuaded his friend Jacques Doucet to sell to the couple.<sup>367</sup> (figure 3.18) Additionally, the Arensbergs purchased several of Duchamp's pre-cubist works, including *Portrait of the Artist's Father* of 1910, (figure 3.19) *The Bush* of late 1910,<sup>368</sup> (figure 3.20) and the *Baptism* of 1911.<sup>369</sup> (figure 3.21) The concatenate purchase of these early, less well known works, along with Duchamp's later studies for the *Large Glass* and readymades such as the *Why Not Sneeze, Rrose Sélavy?* are indicative of the couple's attempt to round out their collection of Duchamp's works.

As the Arensbergs were working with Duchamp to bolster their collection, they were simultaneously working on their own to find it a permanent home. According to the state of California, in order for the Francis Bacon Foundation to retain its tax-exempt status, its beneficiary must be a California non-profit organization.<sup>370</sup> This presented an initial stumbling block for the couple, whose dearest dream was to use their collection as the basis of an independent museum that would be built on land adjacent to their Hillside Avenue Home. As Walter explained to Le Corbusier, one of the many noted architects considered for the project, what he wanted was:

to erect a building which would serve both as a home and as a place of exhibition for our things, so that possibly this building might be left in the future, as public property, to serve for exhibition purposes solely, very much like some of the very small museums in Paris, such as the Moreau.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Schwarz has identified the owner immediately prior to the Arensbergs as being Jacques Doucet. (Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 327, p. 631) According to Duchamp's recollection, he arranged the sale from his brother's private collection, even though his brother died four years before the sale took place. List attached to a letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arenseberg, 8 September 1951. Box 6, Folder 35, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>368</sup> Duchamp arranged for the couple to purchase *The Bush* from his childhood friend, Dr. Raymond Dumochel in 1938, for approximately \$400. List attached to a letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arenseberg, 8 September 1951. Box 6, Folder 35, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. \$400 in 1938 would have the approximate buying power of \$6,123.68 today.

<<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>369</sup> The *Baptism* was purchased from Duchamp's family friend Dr. Ferdinand Tribout in 1937, for approximately \$200. List attached to a letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arensberg, 8 September 1951. Box 6, Folder 35, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. \$200 in 1937 would have the approximate buying power of \$3,002.46 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>370</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 270.

<sup>371</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Le Corbusier, 10 August 1939. Box 11, Folder 11, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 269.

Such a solution would meet virtually all of the couple's wishes, preserving the unity of their collection as well as providing a self-perpetuating institution under whose auspices Walter's research could continue. Unfortunately, this solution was unfeasible for several reasons. Dominant among them was that the couple simply lacked sufficient finances to build and fund such a project. More specifically, they lacked the means to both fund the project and continue to feed their addiction to collecting art, and ultimately their acquisitive drive won out. The couple instead chose to look for an institution that could build them the museum they desired.

This plan presented its own difficulties. As of 1938 California had only one museum that dealt with art in any capacity: the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art,<sup>372</sup> which had been founded in 1910 without either an art collection "or the means to acquire one."<sup>373</sup> Underscoring the continued lack of priority of the museum's focus on art is the fact that, by 1939, the Museum of History, Science and Art had not had an art curator "since the last one was fired early in [the] Depression."<sup>374</sup> As the only art museum in southern California, however, the Arensbergs had little choice but to name the "Museum Associates" of the Los Angeles County Museum as the foundation's beneficiaries.<sup>375</sup> Attesting to the city's resistance to modern art, the museum never acknowledged the intended gift of the Arensberg collection, formally or informally.<sup>376</sup> This apparent lack of interest led Walter to resign from the museum's board of governors, and ultimately to the Arensbergs searching for a different home for their collection.

Following the end of their relationship with the Los Angeles County Museum, the Arensbergs were courted by more than two dozen universities, museums and other institutions.<sup>377</sup> One option which presented a particular appeal was raised by the dealer Sidney Janis. Like the Arensbergs, Janis was struck by the lack of support for

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<sup>372</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' pp. 219-220.

<sup>373</sup> 'History,' in *About LACMA*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art website. <<http://www.lacma.org/info/AboutLACMA.aspx#history>> [accessed 13 December 2009].

<sup>374</sup> Anonymous, 'Light in Los Angeles,' *Time*, 11 September 1939, p. 60.

<sup>375</sup> Francis Bacon Foundation, Articles of Incorporation of the State of California, 9 April 1937, clause eight. Box 5, Folder 1, Francis Bacon Foundation Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>376</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 271.

<sup>377</sup> A comprehensive account of the negotiations between the Arensbergs and all of the various institutions interested in obtaining their collection can be found in Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, 'For the Want of a Nail: The Disposition of the Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection' (unpublished Masters thesis, University of California at Riverside, 1987).

modern art in California. His proposed solution was to establish a Museum of Modern Art of Los Angeles, which would be loosely affiliated with the Museum of Modern Art in New York.<sup>378</sup> The collection of this museum would have, as its core, his own collection along with those of the Arensbergs, Katherine Dreier's personal collection and the collection of the Société Anonyme. Additionally, Janis claimed that Ruth Maitland, Galka Scheyer, and Edward G. Robinson were also considering donating their collections, once the museum had been established.<sup>379</sup>

The prospect of their collection constituting the founding core of an institution held great appeal for the couple. Unfortunately, Janis's plan swiftly came to nothing. This was due in large part to Janis overstating the degree of influence he held with the Museum of Modern Art and the museum's lack of interest in supporting the project. Moreover, the project was effectively doomed when Katherine Dreier decided to withdraw her support. Relations between the Arensbergs and Dreier had long been competitive and only superficially cordial, particularly since the Arensbergs' begrudging sale of the *Large Glass*.<sup>380</sup> In addition to balking at the prospect of uniting her collection with that of her Californian competitors, distance also presented a problem for Dreier. Situated as she was in Connecticut, Dreier was convinced she would not be able to exercise sufficient control over the organization and direction of such a museum.<sup>381</sup>

In the innumerable negotiations that followed the dissolution of their agreement with the Los Angeles County Museum, Walter and Louise's insistence upon tying their art collection to a continuation of the Baconian research presented almost insurmountable problems. Even Fiske Kimball of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, to which the collection would ultimately be given, initially rejected the idea of pursuing the Arensbergs' collection when it was brought to his attention in 1943. In a

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<sup>378</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 13 January 1938. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>379</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 265.

<sup>380</sup> The extant correspondence between Walter Arensberg to Katherine Dreier, dating from between 16 August 1923 and 25 August 1926 can be found in YCAL MSS 101, Box 2, Folder 56. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>381</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 13 January 1938. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

letter to the collector Albert Gallatin, Kimball wrote that Walter's insistence on attaching the collection to his Baconian research would make any agreement with the Arensbergs untenable, "I am afraid that I would not have been able to get together with him on that ground."<sup>382</sup>

Nonetheless, Walter felt his two passions to be inextricably linked and refused to relinquish his goal of preserving and perpetuating both his collection and research in some measure of unity. According to Walter, the "so called Baconian method for the interpretation of nature was applicable to the interpretation of art;" a point that he felt was, "particularly true of [works by] Klee or Duchamp."<sup>383</sup> As Walter despairingly wrote one friend: "If I could only find a haven for the art collection which would be willing to take over in some way or other the direction of research on the Shakespeare-Bacon problem, I would feel very happy."<sup>384</sup> The strength of the couple's art collection, however, kept institutions hopeful that some compromise could be achieved. The Arensbergs' art collection was the last of the great collections formed during the *Armory Show* era to remain intact, and the couple were committed to ensuring that it remained intact for as long as possible.<sup>385</sup>

The couple's other dominant desire for their collection was that it should remain in California. The Arensbergs had become terribly fond of their new-found home state,<sup>386</sup> and had become equally concerned about the lack of publicly accessible culture within the Los Angeles area. There were no art museums in southern California outside of the Los Angeles County Museum, and none at all that dealt with modern art. Moreover, while there was individual interest in modernism, southern California had developed and even encouraged "an almost clannish pride in

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<sup>382</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Albert Gallatin, 16 July 1943. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 333.

<sup>383</sup> Interview of Walter Arensberg by Kenneth Ross, n.d (c. 1948). Box 44, Folder 7, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' pp. 300-301.

<sup>384</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Norman Fenton, 10 June 1941. Box 7, Folder 29, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives., WLA, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 299.

<sup>385</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 335.

<sup>386</sup> Both of the Arensbergs were originally from the east coast of the United States. Walter was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Louise in Boston, Massachusetts.

its art isolation.”<sup>387</sup> Walter and Louise had each expressed similar assessments of the cultural life in the Los Angeles area, with Louise describing the city as a “hinterland of ‘culture.’”<sup>388</sup> Walter, more poetically adapted the words of Coleridge’s ancient mariner: “People, people everywhere, and not a drop to think.”<sup>389</sup>

Even following the dissolution of arrangements with the only art museum in southern California, the couple persisted in their goal to help foster a cultural life in the Los Angeles area. With no viable museological prospects, the couple entertained many expressions of interest from the state’s universities. For years the Arensbergs played the competing institutions against one another, particularly the two front runners in the competition, Stanford University and the University of California.<sup>390</sup> After three years of intensive negotiations the Arensbergs’ first significant deed of gift was signed on 19 September 1944, committing the collection to the University of California at Los Angeles.<sup>391</sup>

The couple initially had high hopes for their arrangement with the University. Having finally secured a permanent home for their legacy, the couple attempted to reunite to it the one work that they could not reclaim, the *Large Glass*. (figure 3.12) Despite the tension between Duchamp’s two patrons, the couple so desired that this “supreme monument of Marcel’s genius”<sup>392</sup> find a permanent home alongside their collection that they were willing to extend the olive branch. The couple sent Duchamp a copy of their agreement with UCLA, and urged him to promote their plan to Katherine Dreier.<sup>393</sup> Understanding the competitive tension over Duchamp’s legacy, the Arensbergs proposed that Dreier offer her collection as an entirely

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<sup>387</sup> William Preston Harrison, ‘The Problems of the Museum in Contemporary American Art,’ *Space* 1, no 2 (1930), p. 10. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s “Silent Guard”,’ p. 218.

<sup>388</sup> Letter from Louise Arensberg to Sophie Treadwell, 15 January 1922. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s “Silent Guard”,’ p. 217.

<sup>389</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Sophie Treadwell, n.d. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s “Silent Guard”,’ p. 205.

<sup>390</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s “Silent Guard”,’ p. 303.

<sup>391</sup> Francis Bacon Foundation, Donor Agreement between the Francis Bacon Foundation and the Regents of the University of California, 19 September 1944. Box 33, Folder 7, WLA, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

<sup>392</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Katherine Dreier, 16 August 1923. YCAL MSS 101, Box 2, Folder 56. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>393</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Louise Arensberg, 12 March 1945. YCAL MSS 101, Box 2, Folder 55. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.



separate gift to the University. Dreier's collection would thus be housed in separate rooms from that of the Arensbergs' collection, "and they could always be known as deriving from her."<sup>394</sup>

Aware of the jealous tension that existed between Walter and Katherine, the Arensbergs even pleaded directly with Dreier through Louise. She reassured Dreier of the "great changes" that had occurred in the cultural and intellectual life of southern California over the decade since Sidney Janis's Los Angeles Museum of Modern Art had last been proposed.<sup>395</sup> Moreover, she emphasized the vibrancy of the university and its museum, insisting that:

In the field of Modern Art there is of course a very great interest in Marcel Duchamp's work, and as the number is so limited we can't help wishing that other works of his might eventually come to rest under the same roof as those which we have already given to the Museum\_ Do keep the thought in the back of your mind\_<sup>396</sup>

Unfortunately for the Arensbergs, Katherine Dreier was reluctant to cooperate. The obstacles of distance and control remained as problematic for this plan as they had been for the earlier proposal by Sidney Janis. Moreover, Dreier's personal collection was simultaneously being courted by Yale University and she wished to see what they would do with the Société Anonyme collection after the war before committing her private collection.<sup>397</sup>

The failure to secure Katherine Dreier's cooperation was not the only difficulty the Arensbergs encountered in their dealings with UCLA. Included within the deed of gift were certain requirements that UCLA needed to fulfil in order to receive the collection. Chief among the requirements beholden upon the University was that, within a reasonable time after the end of the war, the institution raise the

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<sup>394</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 11 January 1945. Box 6, Folder 29, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>395</sup> Letter from Louise Arensberg to Katherine Dreier, 25 April 1945. YCAL MSS 101, Box 2, Folder 55. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.. Louise Arensberg's underlining.

<sup>397</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Louise Arensberg, 12 March 1945. YCAL MSS 101, Box 2, Folder 55. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

necessary funds for, and complete the construction of a new museum to house the collection.<sup>398</sup> When the war ended and the Arensbergs failed to see the desired progress, the couple began to put pressure on the University. The deed of gift was re-drafted three times within 1946, each time placing new deadlines on the institution and demanding that the University demonstrate progress in constructing a new home for their collection.<sup>399</sup> The Arensbergs' concerns were not without merit, as the University never got around to asking for the necessary funds from the governor's office.<sup>400</sup> Ultimately convinced that the construction of their museum was not sufficiently high on the University's list of priorities, the Arensbergs formally annulled the deed of gift on 1 October 1947.<sup>401</sup>

Despite the short life of the Arensbergs' gift to UCLA, the bequest of the collection garnered national publicity, a significant feat considering the lack of artistic prestige of the recipient institution.<sup>402</sup> As the war in Europe and the necessities of California tax law had effectively prevented Duchamp assisting with the disposition of the collection, it has been suggested that this press attention was the first indication Duchamp had of the Arensbergs' efforts.<sup>403</sup> Walter did not directly inform the artist about the deed of gift until three months after it had been signed.<sup>404</sup> Once he became included in the process however, the Arensbergs relied upon Duchamp to act as their emissary, stressing their collection's identity as a "monument" to the artist.<sup>405</sup> As Walter insisted:

The core of our collection, and its unique feature, is the group of your works.

In a way, therefore, the museum will be a monument to you, and the presence

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<sup>398</sup> Walter Arensberg, memo to unspecified recipient, marked: 'RE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,' 5 March 1946. Box 33, Folder 9, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>399</sup> 'Sequence of Events in re Art Gift to UCLA,' 19 September 1944 - 4 August 1947. Box 33, Folder 3, Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 309.

<sup>400</sup> [Walter Arensberg], 'Resume of Mr. Arensberg's talk with Dr. Dykstra at his home on August 4, 1947', p. 2. Box 33, Folder 9, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>401</sup> Abrogation of Agreement between the Francis Bacon Foundation and the Regents of the University of California, 1 October 1947. Box 33, Folder 2, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>402</sup> Anonymous, 'Arensberg Wills the Nude,' *Newsweek*, September 1944, p. 102. Anonymous, 'Arensberg Collection is Donated to U.C.L.A.,' *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 October 1944, p. 9. J. Gibbs, 'Arensberg Gives Collection to California,' *Art Digest*, 19 (1994), p. 7.

<sup>403</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 304.

<sup>404</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 11 January 1945. Box 6, Folder 29, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

of all the other things will serve as a means of defining how completely individual is your contribution to the art of the twentieth century.<sup>406</sup>

The assistance Duchamp was able to offer the couple was necessarily limited while the collection was destined for UCLA. It expanded substantially, however, as soon as the deed of gift was annulled.

## Philadelphia

Another significant effect of the national publicity surrounding the Arensbergs' decision to present their collection to UCLA was that none of that publicity mentioned Walter's Baconian research.<sup>407</sup> The assumption that Walter had relented, at least somewhat, on this point reinvigorated interest in the collection. It certainly played a part in the decision of Fiske Kimball, the director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, to visit the couple and feel-out the state of affairs during a trip to California in 1947.

In addition to the Arensbergs' apparent newfound flexibility regarding the Baconian research, the status of their collection had changed as well. The composition of the collection had not changed greatly in the intervening period, but the status of its Duchampian core had. While he would see an even greater upturn in popularity during the 1950's, the beginning of the renewed interest in Duchamp and his work can be seen as early as the 1940's. In 1943, the Museum of Modern Art became the first museum to acquire one of Duchamp's creations when it purchased a deluxe edition of the *Boîte-en-Valise*.<sup>408</sup> The following year, MoMA displayed the *Large Glass* as part of its fifteenth anniversary show, only the second of three times that the work would ever be displayed publicly. In 1945, MoMA purchased another work by Duchamp, *Passage from Virgin to Bride*, (figure 3.22) the first traditional work by Duchamp to enter a museum collection.<sup>409</sup> March of 1945 saw the publication of the special edition of the *avant-garde* periodical *View* devoted to Duchamp, and 1946 saw the publication of the first extended interview with the artist, conducted by James Johnson Sweeney.<sup>410</sup> As the cornerstone of the Arensberg

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<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 333.

<sup>408</sup> Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, pp. 272-273.

<sup>409</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 252, p. 569.

<sup>410</sup> James Johnson Sweeney, 'Interview,' *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin*, 13 (1946), pp. 19-21.

collection, the rising prestige of Duchamp necessarily made the whole of the Arensberg collection more desirable.

This period had also seen changes in one of the collection's dominant suitors, the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The museum's director, Fiske Kimball, had managed to augment the museum's more traditional collection with the lifetime loan, and future donation, of A. E. Gallatin's substantial collection of modern art in 1943. Smaller than the Arensberg collection, though equally significant, Gallatin's two hundred work strong collection included three pieces by Picasso, including one of his *Three Musicians*, as well as Duchamp's *Virgin, No. 1*, which had so long eluded the Arensbergs.<sup>411</sup> (figure 3.23)

Even with Gallatin's generosity, Kimball still had to contend with the conservatism of Philadelphia's board of directors. With the support of the board's president, Sturgis Ingersoll, Kimball's argument promoted the idea of creating a comprehensive museum collection. "Our latest work is a Cézanne painted in 1905. The earliest oil in this collection is the Picasso of 1906 – these pictures just fill the gap from then to the present."<sup>412</sup> A. E. Gallatin suggested that Philadelphia pursue the Arensberg collection as a complement to his own only months after Philadelphia accepted his collection in 1943. It would be another four years before the museum's board was capable of greater confidence in the acceptance of 20<sup>th</sup> century art, and could consider the goal of forming a collection "absolutely in first place for the 20<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>413</sup>

Fiske Kimball, eager to strengthen the museum's modern collection, first visited the Arensbergs' home in February of 1947.<sup>414</sup> At the time of this visit, the

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<sup>411</sup> Gallatin's collection, hung under the name 'The Gallery of Living Art' at New York University since 1927, formed one of the first public museums of modern art in the United States.

<sup>412</sup> George and Mary Roberts, *Triumph on Fairmount: Fiske Kimball and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1959), p. 201. This quotation appears in the Roberts' book without any reference to its source. This text however relies heavily upon the notes and passages that Kimball prepared during his lifetime for an intended autobiography. Thus, the quote can be attributed to Fiske Kimball with impunity.

<sup>413</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Sturgis Ingersoll, 10 February 1947. Box 162, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>414</sup> This was not the first time that a representative of the Philadelphia Museum of Art had visited with the Arensbergs. The curator of painting, Henry Clifford, met with the Arensbergs in August 1940 and during dinner, requested point-blank that Walter consider Philadelphia among the possible recipients of

Arensbergs were still locked into their agreement with the University of California. This did not, however, stop Walter from expressing his increasing frustration with the University almost as soon as Kimball arrived. As Kimball wrote to Sturgis Ingersoll:

I had hardly got in the door when he said, they are trying to get out of it: the conservative Trustees of the University hate the stuff: 'I am thinking of using you as a wastebasket.' I said, 'We are no wastebasket, but we like fine collections like yours.'<sup>415</sup>

While he did not pursue the Philadelphia Museum of Art's interests any further that day, Kimball did pen an eight page letter to Ingersoll that evening describing in detail the merits of the collection and the positions of the various contending museums. Also, he arranged to visit the Arensbergs and their collection again five days later. Not wanting to pursue the collection if the PMA's trustees would oppose the collection, he asked Ingersoll to discern the likely response of the board and "Pray wire me your view."<sup>416</sup> Kimball's desire for the Arensbergs' collection was such that, on Ingersoll's word, he promised to "work to get the U.C.L.A. deed abrogated by mutual consent, + the stuff headed our way."<sup>417</sup>

It would be another eight months before the deed with UCLA ceased to govern the collection's destiny, but even then the way was not yet clear for Philadelphia. The couple's dissatisfaction with the trustees of the University of California had not yet soured the couple on their desire to have their collection as the foundation of a modern arts community in southern California. Having ruled out the largest university and the only museum, the Arensbergs placed their hope in the nascent Modern Institute of Art championed by the actor Vincent Price.

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their collection. According to Clifford, Walter stood up without a word and went upstairs, where Clifford could hear him pacing back and forth. Louise eventually went up to retrieve her husband, and neither of them made any reference to his suggestion again. Henry Clifford left the meeting thinking that Philadelphia's case was "hopeless." Henry Clifford, handwritten account of Clifford's 1940 meeting with the Arensbergs, notes for 'The Golden Age of Collecting,' written 6 December 1956. Box 162, Folder 30, Fiske Kimball Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>415</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Sturgis Ingersoll, 10 February 1947. Box 162, folder 29, Fiske Kimball Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.. Kimball's underlining.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

Walter and Louise did not, however, let their interest in maintaining the collection in California prevent them from encouraging in the PMA and several other institutions a very real sense of hope regarding their chances of receiving the collection. As the representative of one institution would later recall: “There was scarcely a day [Walter] did not receive important museum directors, trustees, or university presidents who were competing for his favor... he charmed them with his courtly manners, but he left them dangling.”<sup>418</sup> This effect was achieved by two equally frustrating tendencies on the part of Walter and Louise; on the one side a profound streak of indecisiveness, and on the other a rather more malignant delight in the cat-and-mouse games of institutional courtship.

Walter’s indecisiveness and inability to commit with action to a decision reached were lifelong traits of almost legendary proportions. Noting the dissolution of two donation plans, it is understandable that he and Louise were wary of dismissing any potential recipient institution. It is equally understandable that the couple would have become wary of committing their collection to any institution until they were convinced that the institution both could and would hold up its end of the bargain. However understandable Walter’s commitment-phobia may have been, it does not account for all of the couple’s behaviour. The hoops through which they made various institutions jump as well as their propensity for stringing along institutions that had already been ruled out, led even Vincent Price to believe that the Arensbergs had “baited” him.<sup>419</sup> Similarly, the couple led Katherine Kuh and the Art Institute of Chicago to believe that they were likely recipients, and made demands based upon those assumptions, even as the couple moved forward in their arrangements with the Philadelphia Museum of Art.<sup>420</sup>

Fiske Kimball appears, however, to have been unusually perceptive of and sensitive to the eccentricities of the Arensbergs’ personalities. In the account of his

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<sup>418</sup> Kuh, *The Open Eye*, p. 59.

<sup>419</sup> Vincent Price, *I Like what I Know: A Visual Autobiography* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959), p. 183. Quoted in Sawelson-Gorse, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s “Silent Guard”,’ p. 313.

<sup>420</sup> There is reason to believe that the Arensbergs never genuinely considered Chicago as an ultimate destination for their collection. Two years prior to the exhibition in Chicago, Walter mentioned the possible loan to Kimball with the note that it “has nothing whatsoever to do with the question of the ultimate destination of the collection.” Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 8 July 1948. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

return visit with the couple, he closes an otherwise promising description of the meeting with the line: “We shall see what we shall see.”<sup>421</sup> Further evidence that Kimball understood the situation he was dealing with can be found in the almost military precision with which he proceeded in his attempt to secure the Arensbergs’ collection.

As Walter’s frustration with UCLA was that “the conservative Trustees of the University hate the stuff,”<sup>422</sup> Kimball had Sturgis Ingersoll, as president of the PMA’s Board of Governors and an advocate of modern art, write to Walter a few months later. This lengthy letter of introduction both sold the Museum and its board as progressive advocates of modern painting, and simultaneously attempted to assuage one of Walter’s early concerns; that his collection would be more useful in an area that did not already have such a high concentration of modern art.<sup>423</sup> Fiske’s attention to the needs and concerns of his prospective donor went as far as to have Sturgis Ingersoll replace the letterhead of his law office with that of the museum when writing to Walter, as he discovered that Walter “hates lawyers as such!”<sup>424</sup>

In addition to catering to Walter and Louise’s every concern, Kimball was not above attempts to sabotage his opponents. In the Arensbergs’ response to Ingersoll, Walter had indicated his desire for the collection to remain in southern California. Citing the artistic isolation of the area, Walter wrote: “There is a famine here, and there is also just beginning a very much needed movement to found a Museum of Modern Art.”<sup>425</sup> Kimball responded almost immediately with a letter that, while it began with the line: “It is never good form to run down the competitor’s proposition,” proceeded at great length to enumerate the problems that had beset the Museum of

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<sup>421</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to R. Sturgis Ingersoll, 18 February 1947. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>422</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Sturgis Ingersoll, 10 February 1947. Box 162, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>423</sup> Letter from R. Sturgis Ingersoll to Walter Arensberg, 1 August 1947. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>424</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Sturgis Ingersoll, 7 November 1947. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>425</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to R. Sturgis Ingersoll, 8 September 1947. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

Modern Art in New York, as well as those which led to the failure of similar proposed institutions in Boston and Washington D.C..<sup>426</sup>

Kimball's concerns regarding the Modern Institute of Art did not fall on deaf ears. Among Walter and Louise's primary concerns regarding their collection was permanence. Much as the deed of gift with the University of California was conditional upon the building of a permanent structure to house the collection, any gift to the Modern Institute would have similar strings attached. While the Arensbergs avowedly wanted their collection to assist in opening up access to modern art in southern California, they were not willing to do so at the possible expense of the collection's permanence. As Kimball later wrote, "The Arensbergs wanted the collection appreciated for itself, not as bait for new wings, special buildings, or fund raising."<sup>427</sup> Kimball's predictions were accurate though, for without a substantial and unqualified donation of either art or funds combined with infighting amongst its board members, the Modern Art Institute survived for only two years. The Institute was formally dissolved in July of 1949.<sup>428</sup>

Even without the Modern Art Institute to contend with, there was still a great deal of work to be done. The Arensbergs wanted to keep the field open and were actively entertaining Harvard University's Fogg Museum,<sup>429</sup> the University of San Francisco,<sup>430</sup> Stanford University, the University of Minnesota,<sup>431</sup> and the National Gallery of Art.<sup>432</sup> Appreciating this fact, Kimball kept in regular contact with Walter, writing him on a nearly monthly basis for most of 1948. Moreover, arrangements were made for Sturgis Ingersoll to travel to California to meet personally with Walter and Louise, in hopes that his presence could "turn the trick for us."<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Walter Arensberg, 18 September 1947. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>427</sup> Kimball, 'Foreword,' in *Arensberg Collection: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Section*, n.p.

<sup>428</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 314.

<sup>429</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 5 January 1949. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>430</sup> Fiske Kimball, handwritten summary of Kimball's 1949 visit with the Arensbergs, 28 February, 1949. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>431</sup> Letter from Louise Arensberg to Marie Kimball, 28 February 1949. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>432</sup> Fiske Kimball, handwritten summary of Kimball's 1949 visit with the Arensbergs, 28 February, 1949. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>433</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to R. Sturgis Ingersoll, 7 November 1947. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.



While Ingersoll's visit failed to bring about a decisive change, he did return with two important pieces of information. Just prior to Ingersoll's visit Walter had suffered "some sort of cerebral disturbance," which the couple had taken as "a warning... that he must put his house in order and determine what to do with his collection."<sup>434</sup> The same visit had also revealed to Ingersoll that Walter and Louise "are a markedly acquisitive couple."<sup>435</sup> Not only acquisitive, Ingersoll concluded that: "Undoubtedly, [they have] never experienced much delight in giving things away."<sup>436</sup> Any hope these revelations may have inspired, that concern for Walter's health and a desire to "set [their] house in order" would override their deeply rooted acquisitiveness, would unfortunately prove to be unfounded.

Likely frustrated by the Arensbergs' unwillingness to move forward after nearly two years of consideration, Fiske opted to change tack and attempted to get a more definite answer out of Walter regarding the future of the collection. Taking advantage of the availability for purchase of Duchamp's *The Chess Game* (figure 3.24) through Walter Pach, Kimball wrote to Walter for advice about the work.<sup>437</sup> Ostensibly inquiring as to whether the price quoted for the work is a good deal, Kimball closes with the following consideration:

Of course if there is any prospect the Museum may ultimately have the greatest group of Duchamps in the world, that would be decisive one way or the other – i.e. if the owner thinks this picture would then be superfluous, or thinks it would then be essential!<sup>438</sup>

Walter offered only tacit approval, merely admitting to liking the painting immensely, and offering his own analysis of how the work fit into Duchamp's larger oeuvre.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> Letter from R. Sturgis Ingersoll to Fiske Kimball, 30 August 1948. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

<sup>437</sup> For some reason the title of the work given throughout this exchange is *Chess Players*. The descriptions of the work, however, clearly identify it as *The Chess Game* of 1910 (Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 185, p. 530), rather than *Portrait of Chess Players* of 1911 (Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 235, p. 557).

<sup>438</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Walter Arensberg, 30 December 1948. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>439</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 5 January 1949. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. The Philadelphia Museum of Art did not buy the work, and the Arensbergs purchased it the following year.

The first definite action regarding the Arensberg collection since the dissolution of the couple's agreement with UCLA occurred in February of 1949. Fiske and his wife Marie spent a week visiting with Walter and Louise in their Hollywood home. The overriding triumph of this visit was the passage of a resolution by the Francis Bacon Foundation, irrevocable after Walter's death, by which the collection would pass to the PMA after the death of both Walter and Louise.<sup>440</sup>

While the resolution did not guarantee the collection to Philadelphia, it did constitute a significant step towards that goal.<sup>441</sup> In order to secure this gesture, Kimball offered Walter and Louise three powerful temptations: a home for Walter's Baconian research, a home for their collection of Pre-Columbian art, and the opportunity to design their own gallery space. With the acquisition of the Arensbergs' art collection so nearly within his grasp, Kimball decided to reverse his original opposition to accommodating Walter's Baconian research. While the Museum was still neither willing nor capable of taking on such a project, Kimball did convince Frank Price of the Free Library of Philadelphia to take on Walter's research.<sup>442</sup>

Kimball was also uniquely willing to house both the Arensbergs' modern collection, and their equally extensive Pre-Columbian sculpture collection. This had become a bone of contention with several of the institutions courting the collection, as few were capable of accommodating both of the periods straddled by the couple's interests. This tension came to a head in their dealings with the Art Institute of Chicago, particularly throughout the planning of the 1949 exhibition of the couple's collection. Chicago had initially proposed an exhibition of both halves of the collection, but repeated reductions in the number of Pre-Columbian works chosen for display caused Walter to insist in frustration that all of the Pre-Columbian works

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<sup>440</sup> Fiske Kimball, Handwritten summary of Kimball's 1949 visit to the Arensbergs, 28 February, 1949. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>441</sup> The resolution allowed the Francis Bacon Foundation to retain legal possession of the collection, and thus the collection could be gifted elsewhere or the resolution could be revoked prior to Walter's death.

<sup>442</sup> Fiske Kimball, handwritten note on ¼ sized blue note paper, likely notes from a telephone conversation, dated 8 February 1949. Box 179, folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

loaned be rescinded.<sup>443</sup> Chicago was not alone in this difficulty, but the comparatively catholic understanding of art embraced by Philadelphia enabled Kimball to offer the Arensbergs the unity they so desired for their legacy.

The most compromised token offered by Kimball was the opportunity for the couple to have their say in the designing of the galleries in which their collection would reside. Embedded within the Arensbergs' desire to have a building constructed to house their collection was the implicit desire to have their modern collection within a distinctly modern structure.<sup>444</sup> This desire led to a frustrating catch-22 for the couple. As the external shell of the Philadelphia Museum of Art had been completed in 1928, Kimball could offer the couple as much space as they wanted within the as yet uncompleted interior of the North-East Temple, and guarantee them, in advance, the money to complete the structure. As the name implies, however, this required them to accept a Neo-Classical structure as their collection's home. On the other hand, no other institution was willing or capable of raising the necessary funds to build such a structure without first having received the gift of the collection. As before, the Arensbergs' interest in the permanence of their collection was ultimately the decisive consideration.

That, despite Kimball's offerings, the resolution was neither binding nor irrevocable was made clear one month after it was passed by the Francis Bacon Foundation. Walter wrote to Fiske Kimball to inform him that they were now giving serious consideration to two newly received requests for the collection. These requests, from Stanford University and The University of Minnesota, included promises to erect a new building in which to house the collection in exchange for "a three months option on the collection."<sup>445</sup> Walter's retreat from this aggressive stance just one week later makes the letter look as though it was an unsuccessful bargaining

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<sup>443</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Daniel Catton Rich, 14 October 1948. Box 2, Folder 4, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>444</sup> The couple's earlier attempts to build a museum for their collection had led to discussions with a number of prominent architects. In addition to Le Corbusier, the couple consulted with Friedrich Kiesler, Clarence Stein and Mies van der Rohe. Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard"', pp. 268-270. The residual effect of these desires can be seen in the unsigned 'Architect's Proposal for U.C.L.A. Museum Building,' n.d.. Box 33, Folder 1, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>445</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 26 March 1949. Box 179, Folder 30, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

tool. It served successfully, however, to highlight the vulnerability of the Museum's position.

In an attempt to crystallize the commitment begun in the resolution, Kimball worked hard to get the couple to visualize their collection within the Philadelphia galleries.<sup>446</sup> While in Hollywood, he drew up draft plans and sections of the proposed gallery spaces, attempting to incorporate all of the Arensbergs' desires.<sup>447</sup> Upon his return, Kimball wrote the couple extensively as the plans for hanging and partitioning the unfinished space progressed.<sup>448</sup> Kimball also requested their input on his tentative gallery layouts, based upon "your greater wisdom and greater familiarity with the individual works."<sup>449</sup> This was to be followed up by a visit to the PMA a few months later. However, like the promised visits of the previous two years, and those of the future, the increasing frequency and severity of the couple's health problems prevented trans-continental travel.

The Arensbergs' promised trip east was of the utmost importance to both Kimball and the couple themselves. Fortunately for the Arensbergs, their immobility was ameliorated by Duchamp's agreement to speak at the Western Round Table on Modern Art at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1949. After his speaking engagement, Duchamp travelled south to visit with his friends and patrons. The timing of this visit necessitated that the future of the Arensberg collection was again at the forefront of everyone's mind. Not only was Kimball attempting to constantly reassure the couple and move the Arensbergs forward on the closest thing they had to a deed of gift, but preparations were well under way for the exhibition of the couple's work at the Art Institute of Chicago.

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<sup>446</sup> In correspondence with Walter, the Northeast Pavilion of the Museum was repeatedly referred to as "your pavilion." Letter from Fiske Kimball to Walter Arensberg, 2 March 1949. Box 179, Folder 30, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>447</sup> [Fiske Kimball], Plan and cross-section drawings, 'Proposed installation of Pre-Columbian, etc, Arensberg Collection,' signed 7 & 8 February 1949. Box 35, Folder 18, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. Fiske Kimball, 'Cross section looking north toward north windows of Section 7,' 25 July 1950. Box 35, Folder 18, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. [Fiske Kimball], untitled plan of galleries with proposed layout, n.d. Box 6, Folder 31, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. [Fiske Kimball], plans of proposed gallery layout marked 'Solution No1/Solution No2', n.d. Box 73, Folder 4, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>448</sup> For the entire month of March there was never a gap of more than four days between letters sent between Walter and Fiske.

<sup>449</sup> Letter from Fisk Kimball to Walter Arensberg, 17 March 1949. Box 179, Folder 30, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

Duchamp was not the Arensbergs' only guest in April of 1949. Katherine Kuh, the curator of modern painting and sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago visited regularly in order to finish preparations for a catalogue of the Arensbergs' modern works to accompany the exhibition. As has been indicated, Walter and Louise actively encouraged Kuh's belief that Chicago was the frontrunner in the competition to receive their collection.<sup>450</sup> In fact, to any outside observer, this would have been a perfectly logical assumption. Regardless, the Arensbergs reiterated to Kimball on several occasions that Chicago was "excluded from consideration as an ultimate home."<sup>451</sup>

Katherine Kuh not only believed that the Arensbergs favoured Chicago as their collection's destination; she also believed she had an ally in Duchamp.<sup>452</sup> Though Duchamp's correspondence with the Arensbergs supports her assessment, there was nothing that Duchamp could have done for Chicago by the time the exhibition was over. Daniel Catton Rich, Chicago's head curator, managed to offend the couple early in the preparations for the exhibition.<sup>453</sup> The insult was compounded when the couple managed to travel to Chicago to view the exhibition. They informed Kuh and Rich that they did not want to be greeted at the train station or wined and dined upon their arrival,<sup>454</sup> and were unfortunately taken at their word. The final insult came from the treatment of the works that were lent. Someone at the Art Institute decided to alter the frame of one of the Arensbergs' paintings without asking, or even mentioning it to the couple.<sup>455</sup> Moreover, during the course of the exhibition,

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<sup>450</sup> Katherine Kuh, *My Love Affair With Modern Art: Behind the Scenes with a Legendary Curator*, ed. by Avis Berman (New York: Arcade, 2006), pp. 18-29.

<sup>451</sup> Fiske Kimball, handwritten summary of Kimball's 1949 visit with the Arensbergs, 28 February, 1949. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>452</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 338. In making this claim, Ms. Sawelson-Gorse cites telephone interviews conducted with Katherine Kuh. Similar inferences can be found in Kuh, *My Love Affair With Modern Art*, ed. by Berman, p. 20.

<sup>453</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, pp. 372-373. As has been mentioned, the initial promise of the Institute was an exhibition that would display the whole of the Arensberg collection, though rising frustrations caused the Pre-Columbian works to be omitted. Letter from Walter Arensberg to Daniel Catton Rich, 14 October 1948. Box 2, Folder 4, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>454</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, pp. 372-373. Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 350.

<sup>455</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 29 March 1952. Box 180, Folder 9, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

one of the visitors set Alexander Calder's *Mobile* vigorously into motion, breaking it in several places.<sup>456</sup>

While the Arensbergs were moving ahead with these various plans in Chicago and Philadelphia the couple appear to have still entertained, however slightly, the proposals of Stanford University, the University of Minnesota, and Walter's alma mater, Harvard.<sup>457</sup> With Walter's difficulty in committing to any decision, the destination of the collection must have been the primary topic of conversation during Duchamp's visit. With the rare opportunity for the trio to meet in person to discuss their hopes and plans for the collection, the Arensbergs arranged to have Duchamp travel to Philadelphia in their place.

This trip, made immediately upon Duchamp's return to the east coast, was the first time that the artist and Fiske Kimball had met. Duchamp's dual role in this meeting is evident in the summarizing letter he wrote to Walter. On the one hand, Duchamp acted as the couple's physical representative in Philadelphia, a role the couple would soon codify by "electing" him Vice President of the Francis Bacon Foundation.<sup>458</sup> Duchamp provided brief descriptions and roughly sketched plans of the areas proffered by Kimball, both the finished and unfinished galleries. He related the couple's wishes to Kimball ("No too small rooms") and Kimball's willingness to acquiesce to the couple's plans ("K[imball] is ready to give you complete satisfaction even though he may give you the impression of bargaining on space").<sup>459</sup> He even suggested to Louise and Walter, how best to deal with Kimball in order to achieve their goals regarding the collection: "K[imball] has a convincing tone of voice\_ Nevertheless, I think that if you insist on a definite plan you will obtain what you want."<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Letter from Daniel Catton Rich to Walter Arensberg, 28 November 1949. Box 2, Folder 6, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>457</sup> Fiske Kimball, handwritten summary of Kimball's 1949 visit with the Arensbergs, 28 February, 1949. Box 179, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 21 October 1949; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 182, p. 278.

<sup>458</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 8 June 1950; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 190, pp. 288-290.

<sup>459</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 8 May 1949; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 177, p. 269.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*. Duchamp's underlining. See note 325.

Duchamp's role in this three-way conversation was not merely that of impassive conduit or even advocate of the Arensbergs' or Philadelphia's cause. As the cornerstone of the collection in question, Duchamp had his own interests to promote. After this initial meeting he proposed only one change to the Arensbergs, that they request room 1659 instead of room 1699 in section six of the Museum's north wing. (figure 3.25) Though Duchamp didn't offer any explanation as to why Louise and Walter should ask for such a thing, the subtle change Duchamp suggested would provide a physical unity to their modern collection that was not present in Kimball's initial offer.<sup>461</sup> Also, contrary to Duchamp's claim, the two rooms were not "of the same size,"<sup>462</sup> rather the room suggested by Duchamp was roughly half again as large as that originally proffered by Kimball. Given the relatively inconsequential nature of the change proposed, it is unclear why Duchamp insisted that "I did not dare propose it myself," and that "You ought to make that proposition."<sup>463</sup>

Duchamp's role as the couple's emissary was not limited to their communications with Philadelphia. In awareness of the possibility that they might be too ill to travel, they sent Duchamp to Chicago to attend the opening of *20<sup>th</sup> Century Art from the Walter and Louise Arensberg Collection*. Writing the couple on the return train to New York, Duchamp expressed a level of effusive excitement regarding the exhibition that is lacking in his description of Kimball's offer in Philadelphia.<sup>464</sup> Duchamp's endorsement of Chicago was due in part to the fact that the couple's work was on full display in Chicago, whereas in Philadelphia the rooms in question were in various states of completion. Further adding to his excitement over Chicago, Duchamp must have enjoyed the fact that the Art Institute had been one of the hosts of the *Armory Show*. The very prospect of having his work courted and displayed with such acclaim by the only museum to play host to the notorious exhibition must have appealed to Duchamp's ego.

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<sup>461</sup> All of the rooms in the initial offer were north facing, except for room 1699. With the change proposed by Duchamp, the proposed galleries would all be contiguous along the north-facing side of the building.

<sup>462</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 8 May 1949; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 177, p. 270.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269-270.

<sup>464</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 21 October 1949; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 182, pp. 277-278.

In addition to providing effusive descriptions of the way in which their works were hung, Duchamp campaigned heavily for the interests of Katherine Kuh and the Art Institute of Chicago. He provided a description of the space that Chicago was offering the couple for their collection, which he insisted was capable of “holding more than easily the whole collection\_”<sup>465</sup> The adequate provision of space was a recurring theme throughout the Arensbergs’ discussions with Kimball.<sup>466</sup> Moreover, Duchamp pointed out the ways in which the Art Institute of Chicago met many of the couple’s broader aspirations for their collection:

As you said in your letter, Chicago is certainly a student center. In the 3 days  
I was there, I saw flocks of students, and a big lecture was given in the  
rooms where the collection is shown\_  
A period of 20 years could easily be agreed upon during which the collection  
would be permanently shown in its ensemble\_  
The point I insist on, is that you must see your collection flying on its own  
wings.<sup>467</sup>

Duchamp’s opinions on the ultimate destination of the couple’s collection were not restricted to Chicago’s merits in isolation. The couple were still, inexplicably, considering the Minneapolis Museum of Art as a potential destination. Duchamp took this opportunity to stress the merits of Chicago over such a relatively remote institution. “I have no feeling towards or against Minneapolis\_ I only feel that remoteness and Cosmopolitanism are two very important factors\_ and I feel that Chicago is better, geographically, than Minneapolis.”<sup>468</sup>

In a closing note, Duchamp attempted to assuage one of the couple’s dominating concerns regarding Chicago’s bid for their collection. Daniel Catton Rich desired to have the couple donate their collection to the Art Institute of Chicago first. On the strength of their deed of gift, Rich insisted that he could raise the necessary

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<sup>465</sup> Ibid., p. 278. Duchamp’s underlining. See note 325.

<sup>466</sup> The couple wavered constantly between the conviction that the proposed hanging plans in Philadelphia would be too cramped, and agreeing with Kimball that the allotted space allowed for ample room.

<sup>467</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 21 October 1949; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 182, p. 278. Duchamp’s underlining. See note 325.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid. Duchamp’s underlining.



funds to alter and complete the necessary gallery space. As has already been mentioned, the couple were not eager to sign over their collection without a concrete guarantee that the recipient institution already had the necessary funds to properly maintain the collection. Duchamp attempted to bridge this concern with the closing endorsement that “I also feel that a promise to raise funds and to keep their word from the Chicago people can be trusted.”<sup>469</sup>

Despite Duchamp’s efforts, Chicago’s attempt to garner the Arensbergs’ favour was dead in the water by the exhibition’s close in mid-December.<sup>470</sup> For all of the negative effects of the exhibition on Chicago’s goals, the exhibition helped to solidify Philadelphia’s desire for the collection. Kimball and Ingersoll were shaken by a letter from Walter in which he expressed several of his mercurial reservations about Philadelphia’s offer; adequate provision of space, Kimball’s desire to display the modern works separately from the pre-Columbian works, and the proximity of the Museum to Albert Barnes and his collection.<sup>471</sup> As such, Ingersoll proposed that the Museum send someone to Chicago to view the collection within a museum setting and prepare a detailed report of its merits.<sup>472</sup>

The author of this report, Carl Zigrosser, Philadelphia’s first curator of prints, provided an unflinching analysis of the couple’s collection in which he identified three primary subgroups within the larger collection. The first of these subgroups, the works of Marcel Duchamp, he described as follows:

About three quarters of Duchamp’s oeuvre is owned by Arensberg. Thus any museum which gets the collection will be on the map, as it were. There remains the question, how important is Duchamp. His earliest work, in my opinion, is worthless; the very latest work in the Dada phase is so esoteric, so anti-all-other-forms-of-art, if one may coin a phrase, that it could have value only to a specialist (and that only in a documentary sense) whereas for the general public it could only be a source of considerable confusion. ...

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<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 19 December 1949. Box 180, Folder 1, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>471</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 3 November 1949. Box 180, Folder 1, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>472</sup> Letter from R. Sturgis Ingersoll to Fiske Kimball, 7 November 1949. Box 180, Folder 1, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

Duchamp's great achievement lies in those intensely cerebral, amazingly complex cubist paintings: *The Nude Descending a Staircase*, *The Chess Players*, *The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes* and *The Bride*. The first of these has received tremendous publicity, notoriety even, which makes it a sure-fire drawing card for any institution which owns it. This gives it certain extraneous advantages for popular consumption but does not take away from the aesthetic merit it shares with the other three paintings in the same vein. It would be wonderful to own them, for they represent one of the completest expressions of the cubist approach, and they will always be a landmark in any historical sequence.<sup>473</sup>

While he maintained certain reservations towards the work of Duchamp, Zigrosser saw more merit in the Arensbergs' collection of Brancusi's sculpture. Describing this collection as potentially, "a great asset to the Museum," he insisted: "All in all I would go overboard for the Brancusis."<sup>474</sup> Similarly he identified the Arensbergs' collection of the works of Paul Klee as an important third subgroup, "I would stick my neck out for him anyday, [*sic*] and especially for the Arensberg group."<sup>475</sup> It is predominantly on the strength of these three groups that Zigrosser concludes: "The Arensberg Collection would be a great asset to the Museum if it were possible to acquire it."<sup>476</sup>

The confluence of Walter's letter, the success of the exhibition in Chicago and Philadelphia's renewed confidence in the strength of the collection itself caused Kimball to redouble his efforts to accommodate the Arensbergs' wishes. To all outside observers, the Art Institute of Chicago was the frontrunner in the competition as the exhibition opened in November. Thus, Kimball proceeded to ensure that Philadelphia was able to meet the Arensbergs' demands, especially in areas in where Chicago was unable to.

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<sup>473</sup> Carl Zigrosser, 'Memorandum on the Arensberg Collection,' 14 November 1949, pp. 2-3. Box 180, Folder 1, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*

Just two weeks after Arensberg wrote Kimball that “I just can’t accommodate myself to the idea of Philadelphia,”<sup>477</sup> Kimball wrote Walter to inform him that the Philadelphia City Planning Commission “recommends an expenditure on the interior of [the] museum in the next five years of \$755,000.”<sup>478</sup> While even Fiske had to acknowledge that the recommendation had to be followed up by actual appropriation, this established Philadelphia as the institution closest to being able to carry out the necessary financial obligations to house and maintain the collection.

Kimball also devoted himself to alleviating two of Walter’s other major concerns: the adequate provision of space and the unification of the modern and pre-Columbian material. As has been mentioned, Walter’s desire to keep the whole of his collection within the same institution was a sticking point in many of the couple’s negotiations. While Philadelphia had been one of the few institutions willing to take on both parts of the collection, Kimball had maintained from the earliest stage that the two parts should be displayed separately. In an attempt to attain the unity desired by the Arensbergs, Kimball enlisted Duchamp’s assistance to develop a proposed arrangement of rooms that would allow the couple enough space to display both parts of their collection together. Despite Duchamp’s letter to the couple, stressing the size of the offer, “20 rooms,” “1400 running feet as against 1100 in Chicago,” and the merits of the galleries’ large windows, the Arensbergs remained unsatisfied.<sup>479</sup> Only during a visit by Kimball to the couple’s home in June of 1950 did Walter and Louise stumble upon the ideal solution - for their collection to occupy the whole of the ground floor of the north east temple.<sup>480</sup>

The alleviation of Louise and Walter’s remaining concerns was not the only accomplishment of Kimball’s visit. According to Walter, as of July 1950, “not only

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<sup>477</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 3 November 1949. Box 180, Folder 1, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>478</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Walter Arensberg, 28 November 1949. Box 180, Folder 1, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. \$755,000 in 1949 would have the approximate buying power of \$6,862,569.33 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>479</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 8 July 1950; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 190, pp. 288-289.

<sup>480</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to R. Sturgis Ingersoll, 30 July 1950. Box 180, Folder 2, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

are we (Philadelphia) on top of the list, but the only one on the list at present.”<sup>481</sup> Philadelphia chose to take advantage of the lack of competition and begin applying pressure upon Walter to sign a deed of gift. As Kimball observed, “While pleased with our spirit of accommodation, Walter still makes no commitment. He still wants freedom to change his mind.”<sup>482</sup> Both Walter’s and Louise’s health were deteriorating, however. The first draft of the deed of gift was drawn up at the end of September,<sup>483</sup> and more specific negotiations progressed swiftly from there.

Amongst the stipulations requested by Walter and Louise were that the collection remain separate and in tact for a minimum of twenty-five years,<sup>484</sup> and that the component works be lent only on rare occasion.<sup>485</sup> An additional point which the couple initially wished to include as a stipulation in their agreement with Philadelphia concerned the size of the windows in the galleries. The lower sills of the windows in the first floor rooms of the north east temple begin seven feet above the gallery floor. Concerned that this arrangement would not provide adequate sunlight to the galleries, the Arensbergs wanted to include a requirement that the bases of the windows be lowered further.<sup>486</sup> Not wishing to commit the Museum to unattainable promises, given a shortage of the necessary brass, Kimball made an alternate suggestion. “What I would do, myself, is cut a central door from gallery 1729 to the large colonnaded portico outside it.”<sup>487</sup> Kimball’s suggestion, and Duchamp’s endorsement of the idea, convinced the couple. This door was, and remains, the only permanent alteration to the building’s façade.

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<sup>481</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to R. Sturgis Ingersoll, 19 July 1950. Box 180, Folder 2, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>482</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to R. Sturgis Ingersoll, 30 July 1950. Box 180, Folder 2, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>483</sup> Fiske Kimball, handwritten draft of contract between the Francis Bacon Foundation and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 29 September 1950. Box 180, Folder 2, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>484</sup> Typewritten draft of, ‘Memorandum of Agreement between the Francis Bacon Foundation and the Philadelphia Museum of Art,’ 1 October 1950. Box 180, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>485</sup> Telegram from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 5 October 1950. Box 180, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>486</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 20 November 1950. Box 180, Folder 4, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>487</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Walter Arensberg, 23 November 1950. Box 180, Folder 4, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

In his desire to get Walter and Louise to finalize and sign the deed of gift, Fiske Kimball and his wife Marie made another trip to Hollywood in December of 1950. Despite Kimball's proximity, there were still a substantial number of hurdles that needed to be cleared. Chief amongst these hurdles was Walter's desire to have the contract re-written such that the collection was divided into classes of works.<sup>488</sup> Of the various classes, only the "class A" material would be subject to the twenty-five year hanging requirement and restrictions on loans. This proposition, itself, was mutually beneficial, providing the Museum with additional flexibility and the Arensbergs the opportunity to fine-tune their physical legacy. The difficulty with the proposed classification system arose from the fact that the Arensbergs had not maintained an active catalogue of the works in their possession. Thus, it was necessary for Walter and Kimball to go through the entire collection, designating which items were to receive what classification.

When one considers that the lawyer advising Kimball and the Arensbergs agreed that the deed of gift was, prior to Walter's proposed revisions, "a contract, fully legal, and could be signed now",<sup>489</sup> Walter's insistence upon having the document multiply re-written begins to look like a delay tactic. Kimball, now used to Walter's commitment phobia, was not so easily put off. Writing to Ingersoll from California, Kimball insisted that "if I don't get Walter on the dotted line for a re-revised revised re-revised contract I shall stay until I do!"<sup>490</sup> "After endless hesitation,"<sup>491</sup> the contract was signed on 28 December 1950.

With the future of the Arensberg collection now legally secure, Duchamp broached the possibility of another donation to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. As has been mentioned, Katherine Dreier had found a home for the Société Anonyme at Yale University during the previous decade. She had not, however, managed to make similar arrangements for her own private collection. A few weeks after the Arensbergs' agreement with Philadelphia was signed Duchamp informed Kimball that

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<sup>488</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to R. Sturgis Ingersoll, 13 December 1950. Box 180, Folder 4, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

<sup>490</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to R. Sturgis Ingersoll, 23 December 1950. Box 180, Folder 5, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. Kimball's underlining.

<sup>491</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Julius Zieget, 28 December 1950. Box 180, Folder 5, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

he had convinced Dreier to bequeath the *Large Glass* to Philadelphia as well.<sup>492</sup> According to Duchamp, Kimball “accepted promptly\_”<sup>493</sup> Kimball was far less enthusiastic when presented with the prospect of receiving the whole of Dreier’s collection.

Kimball and Duchamp travelled together to Katherine Dreier’s home in Milford, Connecticut to view her collection. Kimball was distinctly underwhelmed by the collection, which he described as “a highly personal and family grouping of works not wholly coherent and comprehensive.”<sup>494</sup> Regardless of Kimball’s motivation, his refusal of Dreier’s larger collection undoubtedly caused offence. While she didn’t prevent the *Large Glass* from going to Philadelphia, she also did not make any provisions for the work prior to her death. In arranging for the *Large Glass* to be offered to Philadelphia after her death, however, Duchamp claimed that “I feel confident that I am carrying out her wish.”<sup>495</sup>

Surprisingly, as Walter had described the final act of signing the gift agreement with Philadelphia as like “kissing my children good-bye,”<sup>496</sup> he nonetheless instantly returned to collecting art. In 1950, as the negotiations with Philadelphia were drawing to a close, the Arensbergs added another three of Duchamp’s early works to their collection; the *Church at Blainville* of 1902, (figure 3.26) *Portrait of Marcel Lefrançois* of 1904 (figure 3.27) and *The Chess Game* of 1910, (figure 3.24) which had so recently been offered directly to Philadelphia. Within six weeks of having signed the gift agreement, the couple purchased yet another early work through Duchamp, the *Portrait of Dr. Dumouchel*.<sup>497</sup> (figure 3.28) The following month, upon hearing that Georgia O’Keefe wished to sell the 1910

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<sup>492</sup> [Fiske Kimball], Handwritten note regarding Dreier collection, 16 December 1950. Box 81, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>493</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 16 January 1951; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 194, p. 297. Duchamp’s underlining.

<sup>494</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Katherine Dreier, 17 April 1951. Box 81, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>495</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Fiske Kimball, 6 May 1952. Box 81, Folder 5, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. More will be said about this in the next chapter.

<sup>496</sup> George and Mary Roberts, *Triumph on Fairmount*, p. 275.

<sup>497</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arensberg, 28 January 1951; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 195, pp. 298-299. Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 6 February 1951. Box 6, Folder 34, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

Duchamp watercolour, *Dark Skin*, (figure 3.29) the couple snapped that up as well.<sup>498</sup> The Arensbergs even resurrected their pleas that Duchamp create a photographic reproduction of *Sad Young Man on a Train*, (figure 1.04) the only one of Duchamp's *Armory Show* paintings to elude them.<sup>499</sup>

This purchasing programme was not merely a return to the Arensbergs' acquisitive tendencies. Following the signing of the deed of gift with the PMA, the only modern works purchased by the couple were those by Duchamp.<sup>500</sup> These works, then, were not purchased for personal enjoyment, but rather were part of the Arensbergs' attempt to solidify and complete their investment in Duchamp's career. Upon the purchase of the painting *Dr. Dumochel*, Walter wrote Duchamp to enquire: "Where do you think it should be shipped – to you direct, or to the Museum direct, or out here, so that [the restorer] Miss Adler would be able to clean it...?"<sup>501</sup> It was only at Duchamp's insistence that the work be sent to Hollywood, because "I would like you to live with it,"<sup>502</sup> that Walter enjoyed the work at all.<sup>503</sup>

There is no doubt that Walter and Louise would have continued purchasing Duchamp's works, as they became available, for the remainder of their lives. When Walter discovered that work by Duchamp was being shown at Sidney Janis's gallery, Walter immediately wrote Duchamp to inquire as to the prices of the works shown

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<sup>498</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arensberg, 18 February, 1951. Box 6, Folder 34, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>499</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 6 February, 1951. Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arensberg, 9 February, 1951. Box 6, Folder 34, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>500</sup> Amendment to the deed of gift between the Francis Bacon Foundation and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 18 February 1953. Box 36, Folder 2, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. Walter attempted to acquire a sculpture by Brancusi, (Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 19 May of 1951. Box 6, Folder 35, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.), though he was not successful. The couple also added an additional 14 items to the Pre-Columbian portion of their collection. Amendments to the deed of gift, 24 February 1953 & 29 October 1953. Box 36, Folder 2, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>501</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Duchamp, 6 February, 1951. Box 6, Folder 34, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>502</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arensberg, 9 February 1951. Box 6, Folder 34, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>503</sup> That Walter and Louise did enjoy the work immensely is in no doubt. Upon receipt of the work, Walter wrote an effusive two page letter to Duchamp expressing his gratitude. Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 14 July 1951. Box 6, Folder 35, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

and identities of the present owners.<sup>504</sup> Though Duchamp agreed to find the desired information, he pointed out that “Both paintings are 1910 and less important than the 3 or 4 ‘1910’ you already have in the collection.”<sup>505</sup> Even Kimball, the beneficiary of Walter’s acquisitive largess, felt the need to dissuade Walter from endlessly purchasing Duchamp’s work. Rather, as Kimball pointed out, allowing other museums to acquire Duchamp’s works helped “a) to establish high prices for his work, b) so that he would not have merely a local reputation through only one museum.”<sup>506</sup> Kimball’s rationale struck a chord with the couple, cached as it was in terms of Duchamp’s legacy, and they ceased adding artworks to their gift.

As the couple worked to round out their collection of Duchamp’s work, they were simultaneously physically transferring that collection to Philadelphia. The immediacy with which the couple began divesting themselves of their beloved collection was motivated by a concern over the physical safety of the works. While the potential danger of fire was mentioned on occasion, the dominant concern for the couple was a fear of Cold War escalation and nuclear attack.<sup>507</sup> Thus, the couple wished to divide their collection between the east and west coasts, ensuring that the more valuable works – Picasso, Braque, Brancusi and Duchamp – were sent first to the more secure structure in Philadelphia.<sup>508</sup>

Despite the couple’s safety concerns, the transfer would prove an exceptionally long process, and would not be completed for four years. This was due, in part, to the fact that their collection had continued to grow until the end of 1951. As a result the couple’s art collection ultimately totalled more than 400 items, with 190 “class A” works from the Twentieth Century, 223 “class A” examples of Pre-Columbian art, in addition to several more works designated “class B” or “study

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<sup>504</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 10 October 1951. Box 6, Folder 35, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>505</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arensberg, 15 October 1951. Box 6, Folder 35, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>506</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Walter Arensberg, 29 October 1951. Box 180, Folder 8, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>507</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Sturgis Ingersoll, 22 December 1950. Box 180, Folder 5, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>508</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 20 August 1951. Box 180, Folder 8, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.



material” from both groupings.<sup>509</sup> The problems of quantity were further compounded by the fact that Walter and Louise had decided to have each of these works cleaned and restretched as needed by their restorer prior to being shipped east.

Throughout the four years spent transferring the Arensbergs’ collection eastward, Kimball kept in constant contact with the couple, at times sending them letters on a nearly daily basis. Kimball understood, more fully than any other museum director had, Walter’s love of the “rituals of courtship,”<sup>510</sup> a ritual that could not be allowed to end with the legal transfer of the collection to Philadelphia. As Kimball reported of Walter, “constant re-encouragement will be necessary with this constantly and constitutionally vacillating man.”<sup>511</sup> This constancy of attention served both to assuage Walter’s ego and to keep him abreast of and involved in the progress of the galleries devoted to the couple’s collection.

Chief among Kimball’s unstated concerns must have been Walter’s notoriously mercurial temperament and the fact that, should Walter have become dissatisfied, he could still withdraw from the agreement with the museum at any time. Even when he was thoroughly satisfied with the progress updates provided by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Walter still relied heavily upon Duchamp to provide independent updates and reiterate Walter’s interests to Kimball. As the Arensbergs’ eyes and ears, Walter arranged for Duchamp to visit with Kimball in Philadelphia less than a month after their deed of gift was signed in California. Duchamp dutifully related the details of his meeting and impressions of the plans that were shown him.<sup>512</sup> This service was of such value to the couple, that they frequently insisted that Duchamp be consulted, particularly with regard to the hanging of Duchamp’s own works.

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<sup>509</sup> News Release from the Philadelphia Museum of Art, ‘Arensberg Collection to Open October 16 in Philadelphia,’ sent 19 February 1954. Box 181, Folder 1, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>510</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, ‘Marcel Duchamp’s “Silent Guard”,’ pp. 156-157, 335.

<sup>511</sup> George and Mary Roberts, *Triumph on Fairmount*, p. 266. Letter from Fiske Kimball to Sturgis Ingersoll, 13 February 1949. Box 162, Folder 29, Fiske Kimball Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>512</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arensberg, 16 January 1951; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 194, pp. 297-298.

Despite Duchamp's claims that he was unconcerned about the museological and art historical consecration of his works,<sup>513</sup> the Arensbergs regularly urged Kimball to contact the artist. Particularly with regard to the layout of rooms and hanging of the collection, the couple were insistent that Duchamp be involved in the decision making process. Following more than a week spent in California discussing the layout of the collection with the couple, Kimball wrote home "We are... to ask Duchamp now to review it," before adding emphatically "and nothing is binding on us, of we ultimately decide to do otherwise."<sup>514</sup> The relief that Kimball felt at not being bound to the opinions of a third party was soon dissipated. The couple's requests for Duchamp's involvement became ever more pointed, with Walter ultimately insisting: "Marcel I know would like to be consulted in regard to this matter and we would like you to consult with him. Whichever decision is made we hope that it will be the decision that pleases him most."<sup>515</sup> In fact, the couple's concerns were not quelled until Duchamp provided his explicit approval of any and all plans.<sup>516</sup>

The Arensbergs also wanted to ensure that Duchamp's interests were served by their collection after their deaths. Though, in their deed of gift, the couple had stipulated that no work in their collection could be away from the PMA for longer than four months, the Arensbergs soon came to realize that this placed a substantial obstacle to the expansion of Duchamp's renown. As Walter wrote to Kimball, "There is one reserve that we want to keep alive – in connection with any exhibition of a Duchamp show, whether of Marcel alone or of the three brothers, Marcel should be consulted and his wishes should be decisive."<sup>517</sup> So insistent was Walter on this point that, only a week later he wrote Kimball again, saying "Marcel is the one person in the world to whom we feel that we should lend anything that he wants for any plans

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<sup>513</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Marcel Duchamp Speaks,' in *Marcel Duchamp: the creative act* (Audio CD), ed. by Dachy (13:50).

<sup>514</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Henri Marceau, 17 December 1951. Box 180, Folder 8, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. Kimball's underlining.

<sup>515</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 24 October 1951. Box 180, Folder 8, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>516</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 21 February 1952. Box 6, Folder 36, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>517</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 28 January 1952. Box 180, Folder 9, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

of his.”<sup>518</sup> Unfortunately, and inexplicably, the couple neglected either to alter the terms of the deed of gift or inform Duchamp of their demands on his behalf. As such, this wish died with the couple.

Ill throughout their dealings with the PMA, neither Walter nor Lou survived to see the unveiling of their collection. Louise died of cancer on 25 November 1953, and Walter followed only two months after.<sup>519</sup> Duchamp continued to oversee the hanging and installation of the couple’s collection, including the central placement of the *Large Glass* within the largest of the galleries devoted to the couple’s “outstanding pieces.”<sup>520</sup> (figure 3.30) Likewise, Duchamp took on the role of the guest of honour at the collection’s grand opening in October of 1954.

In light of the influence Duchamp had over the formation and preservation of the Arensbergs’ collection, it is interesting that he is entirely uncredited within the catalogue of the Arensberg Collection. This was not accidental, as Walter had specified this point in no uncertain terms as early as 1950. In Kimball’s notes from the negotiations surrounding the deed of gift, he notes “Walter would like it stated that they never bought anything on anybody’s recommendation – even in case of Marcel Duchamp still less Pach (who was on the floor of the Armory Show the night Walter walked in).”<sup>521</sup> This resistance to attributions of influence was repeated throughout the remainder of Walter’s dealings with the PMA. Walter would only permit Kimball to reference André Malraux’s *Musée Imaginaire* on the condition that he also state that “Our original idea was not derived from him or from anyone else, so far as I am conscious.”<sup>522</sup> Similarly, he insisted that all of the works be re-measured in preparation for the catalogue, because he wanted “no acknowledgement of assistance from Chicago,” through the use of their catalogue.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball. 7 February 1952. Box 180, Folder 9, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>519</sup> Walter died of a heart attack on 29 January 1954.

<sup>520</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 21 February 1952. Box 6, Folder 36, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>521</sup> [Fiske Kimball], Sheet of handwritten notes with the heading: ‘re Catalogue: Walter Arensberg says,’ 18 December 1950. Box 180, Folder 5, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. Kimball’s underlining.

<sup>522</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball, 5 June 1953. Box 180, Folder 11, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>523</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Wrigley to Fiske Kimball, 26 January 1954. Box 180, Folder 11, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

Kimball was not the only one taken aback by Walter's apparently unfair demands.<sup>524</sup> Despite their peculiarity, these demands can be better understood in light of a longstanding notion shared by Walter and Duchamp; that of the collection as a means of expression, as a manner of ready-made artwork created by the collector.<sup>525</sup> Seen in this light, Walter's refusal of the very possibility of influence makes more sense. Sharing as he did Duchamp's notion of genius as a self-creating entity, all ascriptions of influence would be seen as diminishing the innate wisdom of the mind responsible for gathering the collection. As their collection would bear the couple's names, and form the physical basis of their legacy, all must be done while they were alive to ensure that Walter and Louise were presented in the strongest light. This further explains why the couple insisted upon having all of the works cleaned at their expense, and why they continued to purchase artworks after having given up those that they already owned. As their collection was to be the sole monument to the couple's genius, the Arensbergs wanted it not only housed as a contiguous unit, but for as long as possible, and in the most complete and pristine state that they could arrange for during their lifetimes.

Though subtler in his mechanizations, similar concerns were weighing heavily upon Duchamp's own mind. He had managed, with the Arensbergs' help, to gather up the bulk of his oeuvre within a collection of magnificent size and quality. He had further arranged for that collection to be placed within a museum which, by virtue of the Arensbergs' collection had become "incontestably the greatest center for twentieth century art in the country, probably the world, if you consider quality."<sup>526</sup> Nonetheless, Duchamp was aware that the museum was only contractually obligated to display these works for the first twenty-five years. He later admitted this lack of confidence in the PMA's commitment to the legacies involved, observing "It's already been up for twelve or thirteen years, so in twelve or thirteen more it might all go down into the storeroom or the basement!"<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> Kuh, *My Love Affair With Modern Art*, ed. by Berman, p. 24.

<sup>525</sup> Excerpts from 'The Western Round Table of Modern Art, San Francisco, 1949' (Appendix A), *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, pp. 106-114 (p. 114). Kuh, *The Open Eye*, p. 62.

<sup>526</sup> Comments of Dr. Grace L. Morley, Director of the San Francisco Museum of Art and head of museums, UNESCO, 23 January 1951. Box 34, Folder 2, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>527</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 87.

While the casually melancholic tone of this comment played to his public image of serene detachment, Duchamp had already taken precautions against such an eventuality. Many have since commented upon the perfect alignment of Duchamp's *Large Glass* with the glass door that was cut into the south face of the museum's North-East temple. What few fail to note, however, is the fact that the aluminium support for the *Large Glass*, and by extension the *Large Glass* itself, is cemented deep into the floor of the museum.<sup>528</sup> The *Large Glass*, whose placement was determined and installation was overseen by Duchamp, cannot be moved without incurring substantial damage to both the work and to the museum itself. Thus, Duchamp ensured that, even if his work fell out of favour and did end up in the storeroom or the basement, at the very least his masterpiece, the *Large Glass*, would remain to be resurrected by posterity.

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<sup>528</sup> Conversation between Michael Taylor and the author, July 2005.

“To Katherine Dreier  
Knight of the Société Anonyme”<sup>529</sup>

#### Katherine Dreier and the Société Anonyme

##### 4

The Arensbergs were not Duchamp's only partners in the securing and preservation of his artistic legacy. Duchamp's other dominant supporter and ally came in the unlikely person of Katherine Sophie Dreier. Katherine Dreier was introduced to the work of Marcel Duchamp in much the same way as the Arensbergs and the rest of the American public, through the 1913 *Armory Show*. Unlike the Arensbergs, however, the *Armory Show* was not Katherine Dreier's introduction to either American or European modern art. She had been travelling regularly to Europe since 1902, studying painting and exhibiting her own work. Her introduction to modernism came at the 1912 *Sonderbund Exhibition* in Cologne. Rather than the revelatory experience it proved to be for most Americans, Katherine Dreier experienced the *Armory Show* through the dual roles of artist and patron. Dreier's own paintings *The Avenue*, *Holland*, and *The Blue Bowl* (figure 4.01) were both on display amongst the works by American artists.<sup>530</sup> She also lent works from her own collection including Van Gogh's *Head and Shoulders of a Young Woman*, (figure 4.02) among the first of Van Gogh's paintings to be purchased by an American.<sup>531</sup>

Despite her travels and familiarity with *avant-garde* art in Europe and America, Katherine Dreier did not meet Duchamp until 1916 when both were

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<sup>529</sup> Inscription on *Knight of the Société Anonyme*, a birthday gift from Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 10 September 1951. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 538, p. 798.

<sup>530</sup> Shelley Staples, 'The Part Played by Women: the Gender of Modernism at the Armory Show,' *Virtual Armory Show* (American Studies at the University of Virginia, 2001) <<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MUSEUM/Armory/gender.html>> [accessed 24 November 2009].

<sup>531</sup> Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show*, p. 272.

involved in the founding of the Society of Independent Artists.<sup>532</sup> This society, whose founding members also included Walter Arensberg, Walter Pach, Katherine Dreier's mentor Walter Shirlaw, and many of the individuals involved in organizing the 1913 *Armory Show*, was established with the purpose of "holding exhibitions in which all artists may participate independently of the decisions of juries."<sup>533</sup> It was Duchamp's test of the Society's prominent declaration: "No Jury – No Prizes" by submitting the readymade, *Fountain*, (figure 3.11) that constituted the unlikely start of their friendship.

When Duchamp submitted the signed urinal to the Society of Independent Artists' first exhibition in 1917, Katherine Dreier was among the members of the board of directors who voted to have the item removed from display. As much as she was opposed to the display of *Fountain*, Dreier was even more opposed to Duchamp's subsequent resignation from the Society of Independent Artists. In response to his resignation, Katherine Dreier sent Duchamp an effusive three-page letter praising his "personal sincerity," "originality," "strength of character" and "spiritual sensitiveness."<sup>534</sup> She concluded her plea with the request: "I hope, therefore, that you will seriously reconsider [your resignation], so that at our next Director's meeting I may have the right to bring forth the refusal of the acceptance of your resignation."<sup>535</sup>

This letter effectively marked the start of Dreier and Duchamp's thirty-five year friendship, and they would correspond frequently, if not always regularly until Katherine Dreier's death in 1952. Though long-lived, their association nonetheless remains among the more inexplicable pairings in the history of art. Unlike the slight, intellectual and diplomatic Duchamp, Katherine Dreier was in every sense a

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<sup>532</sup> There was ample opportunity for Dreier and Duchamp to have encountered one another in the eighteen months between Duchamp's arrival in New York in June of 1915 and the founding of the SIA in December of 1916, particularly as both frequented the Arensberg salons. Despite this, Katherine Dreier attests both in her initial letter to Duchamp (13 April 1917; YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, folder 317) and later in life that she and Duchamp met in 1916 as fellow members of the SIA.

<sup>533</sup> *Exhibition catalogue of The Society of Independent Artists*, 1917 (unidentified creator); Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <[http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/searchimages/images/item\\_1133.htm](http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/searchimages/images/item_1133.htm)> [accessed 26 November 2009].

<sup>534</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 13 April 1917. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

formidable woman. She was effusive, both in person and on paper. Throughout her correspondence with Duchamp, Dreier's letters regularly ran into multiple pages of single-spaced type-script; a marked contrast to Duchamp's own admittedly telegraphic responses.<sup>536</sup>

Unlike her contemporary, Walter Arensberg, Katherine Dreier was fundamentally a crusader.<sup>537</sup> The values of the American Progressive Era had been imprinted upon all five of the Dreier siblings as children, particularly the four girls.<sup>538</sup> Their father, Theodore Dreier, earned a substantial income working for an iron and steel importer; so much so that none of his children ever needed to worry about supporting themselves.<sup>539</sup> With this freedom, all of the Dreier women devoted themselves to the promotion of social welfare and labour reform causes. Katherine's oldest sister Margaret served as the president of the Women's Trade Union League, convened the International Congress of Working Women in 1919, and worked for a time with Jane Addams at Chicago's Hull House.<sup>540</sup> Katherine's sister Mary served as president of the New York Women's Trade League, through which she became friends with future first lady and social reformer, Eleanor Roosevelt. In 1889 Katherine followed suit and became the treasurer of the German Home for the Recreation of Women and Children, which had been founded by her mother, and in

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<sup>536</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 6 September 1935 (YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 320). Also, Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 26 October 1937 (YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 322). These are but two examples of Duchamp's explicitly apologetic acknowledgement of Dreier's desire for contact and updates. Both are in Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>537</sup> Katherine Dreier, born 10 September 1877, was a mere seven months older than Walter Arensberg, born 4 April 1878.

<sup>538</sup> The Progressive Era was a period in the socio-economic development of the United States occurring roughly between 1880 and 1920. It is often seen as a response to the corruption and excesses of the preceding "Gilded Age," and was marked by inventions, wide-spread social reform programmes, the founding of labour unions, child-labour laws, government regulation of industry and the expansion of voting rights. As with the corresponding social reform movements in Victorian Britain, these reformative crusades were usually championed by members of the upper-middle class.

<sup>539</sup> Though I have found no specifics as to the Theodore Dreier's earnings, at least three of the Dreier children (Mary, Dorothea, and Katherine) lived financially comfortable lives supported entirely through trust funds provided by their father.

<sup>540</sup> Susan Greenberg, 'Art as Experience: Katherine S. Dreier and the Educational Mission of the Société Anonyme,' in *The Société Anonyme: Modernism for America*, ed. by Jennifer R. Gross (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) pp. 97-121 (pp. 98-99).



1903 she became the director of the Manhattan Trade School for Girls and co-founded the settlement house, the Little Italy Neighbourhood Association.<sup>541</sup>

While she shared her sisters' convictions, Katherine saw little distinction between these socio-political crusades and her own passion for modern art. As she wrote to Duchamp in 1926, "Modern Art does something to people which they need very much."<sup>542</sup> It was as much her belief in the social power of art, particularly the spiritual power of modern art and abstraction, as her own career as an artist that led her to participate in the founding of the Society of Independent Artists. From her earliest correspondence with Duchamp it is evident that Katherine Dreier viewed the role of the Society as part of a larger crusade to engender an understanding of modernism in America. Even her pleadings against Duchamp's resignation were couched, in part, in terms of the greater good of American society:

You must, therefore, realize how very essential your contribution to the Society is as a whole, and I felt that only by those of us who had freedom really at heart, standing together, that we would press through our ideals in this country.<sup>543</sup>

Deeply intertwined with her impassioned promotion of modern art in America was her equally fervent belief in the interrelation of spirituality and art. Throughout her life, Dreier was an ardent Theosophist. Theosophy and the work of Madame Blavatsky were discussed around the dinner table during her childhood, and as she grew older these theories formed an integral part of her beliefs on the nature of art.<sup>544</sup> Dreier found reinforcement of her spiritualist aesthetic in Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, which she read in 1912 in the original German. Dreier and Kandinsky's shared belief in Theosophy not only placed an emphasis on the

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<sup>541</sup> Ibid., p. 99. John Angeline, 'Katherine Dreier the Painter,' *Art in America*, (June-July 2006) <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1248/is\\_6\\_94/ai\\_n16533169/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_6_94/ai_n16533169/)> [accessed 25 Novemembr 2009].

<sup>542</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 10 January 1926. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>543</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 13 January 1917. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>544</sup> *In Memory of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Dorothea Adelheid Dreier*, ed. by Katherine Dreier, (Springfield, Mass.: Pond-Ekberg Co, 1940) p. 75. Quoted in Angeline, 'Katherine Dreier the Painter' <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1248/is\\_6\\_94/ai\\_n16533169/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_6_94/ai_n16533169/)> [accessed 25 November 2009].

emotional and spiritual experience of art, but also disdained the intellectual engagement which was propounded by Duchamp. As Dreier wrote disparagingly of one individual, “he is only intellectually interested in Modern Art and not emotionally, which means, of course, that he really isn’t very interested.”<sup>545</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Katherine Dreier never really understood Duchamp or his work. This was not only evident in the case of *Fountain*, but continued throughout their association. In 1921 when Katherine Dreier’s sister commissioned Duchamp to produce a work of art, giving him carte blanche to produce whatever he wanted for \$300, he returned with the semi-readymade *Why Not Sneeze, Rose Sélavy?* (figure 2.05) Not only was Dorothea so displeased with the resulting work that she gave it to her sister, but Katherine disliked the work so much that she gave it back to Duchamp.

Even when Katherine Dreier accepted a work, such as the glass study *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour* (figure 4.03) or the *Green Box*, (figure 4.04) her appreciation and excitement are modulated by the fact that she nonetheless seemed consistently to have missed the point. Upon receiving her copy of the *Green Box* she wrote enthusiastically to Duchamp

It is one of the most perfect expressions of Dadaism which has come my way.... At first it seemed to me that I just could not bear all those torn pieces of paper – and then I woke up to the fact – how right Dada is to jolt us out of our ruts and make us face the situation – what is more important – the matter or the form.<sup>546</sup>

While there are certainly Dada elements to the *Green Box*, the meticulously crafted replica is not a particularly Dadaistic work.<sup>547</sup> Similarly, Dreier never liked the Dadaistically long and nonsensical title of *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of*

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<sup>545</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Alfred Barr, 21 November 1947. YCAL MSS 101, Box 4, Folder 105. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>546</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 10 October 1934. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 320. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>547</sup> This same example was used in Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 298.

*the Glass*) with *One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour*, and instead insisted upon referring to the work as *Disturbed Balance*.<sup>548</sup>

Perhaps the most telling illustration of Dreier's inability to "get" Dadaism is a potentially apocryphal anecdote from Man Ray regarding a lecture given for the Société Anonyme. His first public speaking engagement, Man Ray told a story about a mystical photographic plate that, when developed, showed an essay on modern art written in fine script. As the story progressed Man Ray "broke into a tirade against dealers, collectors and critics, defended the integrity of the artist, questioned the motives of those who were out to please, who were confusing issues; then... ended abruptly by condemning exhibitions in general." Upon finishing his address, Man Ray recounted that, "Miss Dreier rose majestically, came up to the platform beside me and thanked me, then, turning to the audience, announced she would now speak seriously on art."<sup>549</sup>

Despite her persistent difficulties in coming to grips with the nihilistic humour of Dada, Katherine Dreier remained open to all incarnations of the *avant-garde*. As she would later describe her attitude, "I have always considered [Duchamp] one of the most advanced spirits of our Time – and though I did not always understand what he was doing I was intuitive enough to let Time reveal it to me."<sup>550</sup> This openness to artistic innovation of all types was an attribute that Dreier saw as a necessary consequence of her Theosophical beliefs. Even when she did not grasp the nature of the innovation, she maintained that "there is a closer relationship between all progressive people, all people who are living in the 'now,' rather than those who belong to the past, even if they are not of the same profession. Spiritual ties are always the strongest."<sup>551</sup>

This position is best expressed in a letter Katherine Dreier wrote to the president of the Society of Independent Artists and fellow opponent of *Fountain*,

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<sup>548</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 362, p. 662.

<sup>549</sup> Man Ray, *Self-Portrait* (Boston: Bullfinch, 1989), pp. 84-85.

<sup>550</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Alfred H. Barr Jr., 11 May 1935. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 320. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>551</sup> Katherine S. Drier, *Its Why & Its Wherefore*, 1920. Quoted in Greenberg, 'Art As Experience,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 97.

William Glackens, immediately after Duchamp's resignation: "I feel so conscious of Duchamp's brilliancy and originality as well as my own limitation which cannot immediately follow him, but his absolute sincerity... would always make me want to listen to what he has to say."<sup>552</sup> In her displeasure with Duchamp's resignation she repeated this same sentiment to Duchamp himself, attempting to justify her "No" vote by insisting, "I voted on the question of originality—I did not see anything pertaining to originality in it: that does not mean that if my attention had been drawn to what was original by those who can see it, that I could not also have seen it."<sup>553</sup>

All of this has led art historians to observe that "it would be difficult to find anyone less like Duchamp than Katherine Sophie Dreier,"<sup>554</sup> and to wonder how and why they sustained a thirty-five year friendship. The answer is inevitably complex, but the initiation and sustainment of their friendship appears to have been predominantly Katherine Dreier's doing, and based in no small part on an unrequited romantic infatuation with Duchamp. Charles Sheeler, a fellow frequenter of the Arensberg salons, recalled that Dreier's role in the salons was largely that of pursuing Duchamp.<sup>555</sup> Toward that end, Dreier began to take French lessons from Duchamp despite her admitted inability to learn the language. She also began directing her considerable financial resources toward acquiring Duchamp's newest work.

Well into his work on the *Large Glass* by the end of 1917, and not having produced a traditional painting on canvas for over three years,<sup>556</sup> Duchamp was reaching the end of his conventionally productive period. With the Arensbergs voraciously acquiring all available works, and nothing new forthcoming, Dreier initiated her collection by commissioning Duchamp to produce a painting for the library of her Manhattan apartment. The title of the resulting work, *Tu m'*, (figure 3.13) has been taken by some to be a subtle insult to Dreier. The phrase has no

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<sup>552</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to William Glackens, 6 April 1917. YCAL MSS 101, Box 15, Folder 408. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>553</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 13 April 1917. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>554</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 200.

<sup>555</sup> Martin Friedman, 'Oral history interview with Charles Sheeler' (18 June 1959), Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/sheele59.htm>> [accessed 27 March 2008].

<sup>556</sup> At that time, his most recent painting on canvas was the *Chocolate Grinder* of 1914.

meaning in its own right but can be given meaning by the addition of any verb as long as it begins with a vowel. Nonetheless, it has become widely accepted that the title *Tu m'* is a shortening of *tu m'emmerdes*, or *tu m'ennuies*, effectively: "you bore me." It is most likely that, as a predominantly retinal and essentially repetitive painting, the title refers both to this specific painting and the act of painting itself. However, one cannot deny the possibility that the phrase *tu m'emmerdes* captured Duchamp's feelings toward Katherine Dreier at that time.

Regardless of his personal feelings, in 1918 Duchamp was not in a position to rebuff Dreier's interest in his work. Since the end of 1917, Duchamp's relationship with his primary patron, Walter Arensberg, had begun to fade and the interest and support of Katherine Dreier permitted him to maintain the artistic and financial freedom afforded by a dedicated patron.

When Duchamp decided to leave New York for Buenos Aires in September 1918, Dreier followed him, arriving in Argentina just one week later. The purpose of Dreier's trip, unprompted by Duchamp, was ostensibly to research the situation of women in Argentina for a series of articles. At the end of her extended visit Dreier returned to the United States not only with enough material to publish her book *Five Months in the Argentine from a Woman's Perspective*,<sup>557</sup> but also with Duchamp's painting on glass *To Be Looked at...* (figure 4.03) and his *Handmade Stereopticon Slide*. (figure 4.05)

While Dreier may not have been Duchamp's ideal choice of patron, he must have warmed to her somewhat by the autumn of 1919. Having returned to Paris earlier in the year, Duchamp agreed to greet Dreier's boat in Rotterdam when she travelled to Europe to visit family in Germany, and then to entertain her in Paris for several weeks. Not only did Duchamp introduce Dreier to prominent literary, musical and artistic figures, he also took her to Rouen and Puteaux to meet his family; all of whom Dreier was thoroughly taken with. Following her visit she remained in contact with most of the Duchamp family, corresponding with and collecting the works of

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<sup>557</sup> Katherine Dreier, *Five Months in the Argentine from a Woman's Perspective*, (New York: F. F. Sehrman, 1920).

Suzanne and Jacques Villon, and even corresponding with Duchamp's mother Lucie.<sup>558</sup>

While Duchamp's tolerance for Katherine Dreier had improved since their early association, her infatuation with him had not dimmed. Henri-Pierre Roché, who accompanied Dreier and Duchamp in France, recalled that "Dreier kept taking Duchamp's arm and that Duchamp kept disengaging it with a hint of irritation."<sup>559</sup> Dreier's relationship with Duchamp continued to be tinged with some measure of romantic infatuation until Duchamp wrote her of his forthcoming marriage to Lydie Sarazin-Levassor.<sup>560</sup> While there is no overt evidence within Dreier's side of their correspondence to indicate she still carried a torch for Duchamp, the announcement caused her to reassess the nature of their relationship. From that point on Dreier styled herself, as she signed her letter of congratulations, "your most devoted Friend and Adopted-Mother."<sup>561</sup>

Duchamp returned to New York soon after Katherine Dreier in December of 1919. Inspired by her European travels Dreier set about almost immediately on a plan to fill the void in modern art exhibitions left by the hobbling of the Society of Independent Artists.<sup>562</sup> She proposed to do this through the establishment of an "experimental museum"<sup>563</sup> for modern art, which she hoped would:

... meet an urgent need in the art world, where students of art, whether they be critics, writers, lecturers, artists or art students, may come and acquaint themselves with the latest movements in modern painting and sculpture.

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<sup>558</sup> Letters from Lucie Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 7 December 1919 & 15 March 1923. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 316. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>559</sup> Henri-Pierre Roché, Roché journals, 21 November 1919, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centers, Carlton, Carlton Lake Collection University of Texas. Quoted in Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 219.

<sup>560</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 25 May 1927. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>561</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 25 August 1927. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>562</sup> While only Walter Arensberg and Duchamp resigned in protest immediately following the *Fountain* affair, many of the founding board members who adhered to a more European view of modernism left the Society soon after. The entry of the United States into the WWI dealt a second blow to the organization. Though the Society of Independent Artists was not dissolved until 1944, by 1919 it was already clear that its exhibitions would not prove the haven for modernism that it was originally envisioned to be.

<sup>563</sup> This was Dreier's preferred way of defining the nature of the Société Anonyme.

Those familiar with the art conditions in this country, realize the extreme need which exists for such a project to prevent us from continuing too limited in our aesthetic sympathies...

It was therefore decided to open a modest Gallery, without pretence or emphasis upon personal taste, where works of serious men may be seriously studied, and bring new life and new inspiration to those artists, writers and critics who cannot afford to go to Europe to study these same movements there.<sup>564</sup>

It was Katherine Dreier's intention to found this museum with the assistance of her protégée Duchamp. In part to defuse the intensity of Dreier's personality, Duchamp called upon his friend Man Ray to join in the endeavour.

The resulting organization, its full title: Société Anonyme Inc.: Museum of Modern Art, was founded in March of 1920. At its inception, Duchamp was given the title of president; Katherine Dreier was named its treasurer and Man Ray its secretary and photographer.<sup>565</sup> Dreier had secured two rooms in a brownstone just off of Fifth Avenue in Manhattan to serve as the Société offices and gallery, which she enlisted Duchamp and Man Ray to decorate and hang. The Société was to have a continually rotating programme of exhibitions, with a new show every six weeks. As the Société initially had no permanent collection, they relied heavily upon Dreier's extensive personal collection and loans from artists and other collectors.

Support for the museum was to be derived from the sale of annual memberships, in \$5 and \$10 varieties. Also, a fee of 25¢ was charged for admission to the exhibition galleries. Duchamp wryly observed that "*Les gens ont du mal à payer 25 cents\_ Ma première idée était de faire payer 50 cents aux critiques. Mais ils ne viennent même pas.*"<sup>566</sup> When these sources failed to meet the galleries

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<sup>564</sup> Letter from Sheldon Cheney to Kenneth McGowan, 18 March 1921. By virtue of the tone and style of the letter it is almost certain that it was drafted by Katherine Dreier. Quoted in Jennifer R. Gross, 'An Artists' Museum,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, pp. 1-15 (p. 6).

<sup>565</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>566</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Jean Crotti and Suzanne Duchamp, c. 20 October 1920; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 35, pp. 91-95. 'People find it hard to part with their 25 cents\_ My first idea was to charge critics 50 cents. But they don't come at all.' Duchamp's underlining. See note 325.

operating costs, Dreier also made repeated solicitations for support to her wealthy friends and acquaintances.

Despite the members' official titles, the Société Anonyme was the brainchild of Dreier and she provided not only works for display but the very energy and passion upon which it ran. In many ways the organization was the logical extension of her missionary zeal to further the spiritual power of modern art. Under the auspices of the Société Anonyme, Katherine Dreier organized at least eighty exhibitions, and eighty-five public programmes.<sup>567</sup> Through these, she provided the first American exhibitions for over seventy artists, including the first one-man exhibitions for Louis Elshemius, Alexander Archipenko, Jacques Villon, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Ferdinand Léger among others.<sup>568</sup>

In addition to exhibitions, Dreier also employed the authority of the Société Anonyme to organize and write programmes of lectures. This role was somewhat similar to the role she played within the Society of Independent Artists, in which she was in charge of organizing the lectures and "educational teas" for the exhibition.<sup>569</sup> Now, though, she did not merely organize lectures but wrote and gave several of them herself. These lectures were frequently associated with exhibitions on display at the Société Anonyme, such as "do you want to know what Dada is?" which was given by Dreier and Marsden Hartley in conjunction with an exhibition of Hartley's work.<sup>570</sup>

It was not long, however, before Dreier's educational programme extended beyond the physical bounds of the Société Anonyme galleries. Less than a year after the group had been founded Dreier was giving lectures, such as "The Rebels in Art of Our Times," delivered at the Manhattan Trade School.<sup>571</sup> Famously, she illustrated these lectures by bringing along the works that she referenced in order to further encourage her audience to experience modern art for themselves. For her "Rebels"

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<sup>567</sup> Gross, 'An Artists' Museum,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 2.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid. Greenberg, 'Art As Experience,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 102.

<sup>569</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 180.

<sup>570</sup> Katherine Dreier & Marsden Hartley, "do you want to know what Dada is?" 1 April 1921. Gross, 'An Artists' Museum,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 8.

<sup>571</sup> Katherine Dreier, 'The Rebels in Art of Our Times,' 15 January 1921. Text of lecture in YCAL MSS 101, Box 48, Folder 1413. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.



lecture she brought along seven paintings and two sculptural works, including Man Ray's *Lampshade* of 1921, (figure 4.06) and Joseph Stella's substantial, *Brooklyn Bridge* of 1918-20.<sup>572</sup> (figure 4.07)

While Dreier undoubtedly provided the motive force behind the Société Anonyme, Duchamp was also a participant in the Société's early operations. Understandably, Duchamp relinquished his purely nominal role as president only a few weeks after the founding of the group, and instead took up the mantle of exhibitions director. Much as with Katherine Dreier, his role within the Société Anonyme recapitulated his position within the Society of Independent Artists, in which he had been in charge of the hanging committee. In this role Duchamp was in charge of remodelling the rooms on East 47<sup>th</sup> Street that Katherine Dreier rented for the Société's activities; removing the mouldings, lining the walls with blue-white oilcloth, laying a ribbed grey rubber covering on the floor, and converting a large closet into the Société's reference library.<sup>573</sup> (figure 4.08)

In addition to decorating the Société Anonyme galleries, Duchamp was also responsible for the design and hanging of Dreier's ambitious exhibition schedule. Little has been written about Duchamp's earliest forays into exhibition design, largely because there is little known documentation of any of the eight exhibitions held during the Société's first year. Duchamp was not exaggerating in his description of the lack of critical interest in the Société; the only critic who appears to have shown interest in their activities was Henry McBride, who later served on the Société's "advisory board."<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>572</sup> This version of Stella's *Brooklyn Bridge* measures 84 x 76 inches (213.36 x 193.04 cm). Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 13 January 1921. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Greenberg, 'Art As Experience,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, pp. 103-104.

<sup>573</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 226. Henry McBride, 'News and Views of Art, Including the Clearing House for the Works of the Cubists,' *New York Sun and Herald*, 16 May 1920, p. 8. Quoted in Joselit, 'The Artist Readymade,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 39.

<sup>574</sup> David Joselit, 'The Artist Readymade: Marcel Duchamp and the Société Anonyme,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, pp. 33-43 (p. 39).

McBride provides the only detailed account of the Société Anonyme's inaugural exhibition:

... the Société Anonyme, Inc., has covered its walls with a pale bluish white oilcloth than which nothing could be purer, and tinted the fireplace and woodwork to match. The floor covering is of grey ribbed rubber. It seems to have been chosen for its quality of texture and color, and not at all with the idea of insuring firmer foothold for tottering Academicians who drift into these precincts in search of ideas. Consequently it has an expensive look. Before applying the shiny bluish white paint to the woodwork of the rooms, which previously had been in the best civil war style of interior decoration, had been simplified so cleverly that even those who know nothing about cubism, and judge everything that comes along in the way they judge candy, by the sensations they get from it, would admit that the structure was worthy of the holy and somewhat Arabian bluish white. Then there are some nice wicker chairs, and some electroliers that are so astonishingly neat that they must be included as in the works of art. I have used the word "neat" more than once in this description of the new rooms, but let not academicians be seduced by this neatness! The pictures are not the kind that Academicians permit their wives and daughters to see. Danger lurks in this neatness...

Of examples of old fashioned cubism there are Mr. Dessaignes's "Silence," in which noise enters a scarlet funnel at the top of the picture and comes out congealed, certainly silent, in a blue mass at the bottom; Jacques Villon's clever still life; admirable Brooklyn Bridges by James Daugherty and Joseph Stella; and a strong still life by Bruce; and all these paintings are framed in strips of lace paper.<sup>575</sup>

The most commented upon aspect of the exhibition, its antiseptically "neat," almost industrial appearance, is the one which would probably be least noticed by viewers today. Nonetheless, in light of the crowded, Beaux-Arts-style hanging of the 1913 *Armory Show*, and the "go-as-you-please"<sup>576</sup> hanging of the annual Society of Independent Artists exhibition, this was a highly calculated hanging decision. The

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<sup>575</sup> Henry McBride, 'News and Views of Art, Including the Clearing House for the Works of the Cubists,' *New York Sun and Herald*, 16 May 1920, p. 8. Quoted *ibid*.

<sup>576</sup> Anonymous, 'A Mile of Pictures,' *The New York Times*, 11 April 1917, p. 12.

sparsely hung show,<sup>577</sup> presented these new works in a decidedly unthreatening and almost domestic environment. The effectiveness of this hanging scheme in encouraging viewers towards an intimate study of the works on display is evident in McBride's facetious inducement to avoid being "seduced by this neatness!"

Undermining the precision of the hanging and decoration programme, and mentioned only in passing by McBride, was the idiosyncratic decision to frame the works on display with strips of paper lace. (figure 4.09) Unlike the clean, modern hanging programme and the industrially precise wall and floor coverings, which remained throughout the Société's tenure on East 47<sup>th</sup> Street, the lace frames are not evident in later photographs of the gallery. Their use in the Société's inaugural exhibition disconcertingly applies the connotations of children's artwork or home-made valentines to the works on display.

Though not as sensational as the exhibition designs he would engage in on behalf of the Surrealists, the disjunctive frivolity of the lace frames with both the simple setting and the "dangerous" artworks must have been shocking to contemporary viewers. This addition not only undermines the precision of the larger room decoration, but also the "expensive look" of the galleries. This could be seen as an attempt to inject a Dadaist note of childish nonsense into the otherwise grand proceedings. Similarly, it could be taken as a sarcastic turn on the "neat" and "seductive" appearance of the rooms; an acknowledgement that the purpose of the exhibition design was to legitimize the works on display by civilizing and domesticating the otherwise dangerous artwork. Thus, the excessively feminine lace punctuates these efforts by taking them to a nonsensical extreme. It has also been suggested that the use of paper lace strips converted the masculine authority of the frame into an ephemeral, feminine accessory, and that the hermaphroditic juxtaposition of the lace with the "dangerous" artworks was occasioned by the "birth" of Rrose Sélavy.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> For the entire time that the Société Anonyme maintained its operations at East 47<sup>th</sup> Street (approximately one year), the exhibitions contained between sixteen and twenty works.

<sup>578</sup> Kristina Wilson, "'One Big Painting': A New View of Modern Art at the Brooklyn Museum," in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, pp. 75-95 (p. 77). Joselit, 'The Artist Readymade,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 40.

The other roles Duchamp played in the early operations of the Société Anonyme were those of advisor and facilitator. This position within the Société, quieter and more passive, is the one in which he would continue for the remainder of the Société's existence. While it is difficult to isolate Duchamp's role in the borrowing, and later purchasing, patterns of the Société Anonyme, his presence is nonetheless evident throughout. The broad range and somewhat schizophrenic identity to the Société Anonyme's exhibitions and collection is generally seen as the most striking evidence of Duchamp's influence; in which he acted as a balancing force to Dreier's interest in spiritual and expressionistic art. Dreier's personal predilections with regard to *avant-garde* European art tended towards the expressionism of the Blaue Reiter group. Her interest in, and affinity with, the aesthetic theories of Kandinsky have already been mentioned. More broadly, however, Dreier's taste in art is inextricably intertwined with her deeply held personal beliefs.

Katherine Dreier was fiercely nationalistic, leading to an almost blind support of all things German. Her parents were both immigrants from Bremen, who maintained strong ties with their family in Germany. All of the Dreier children spoke German fluently, which both helped shape Katherine's interest in the expressionist work coming from Germany and enabled her to forge friendships and secure loans from an array of German artists. She held a similarly fervent passion for Theosophy, leading to a fascination not only with the work of Kandinsky, but also of Piet Mondrian. Moreover, through her friendship with Kandinsky she also developed relationships with prominent members of the Suprematist and Constructivist movements. Thus, Duchamp's most apparent influence on the Société is the balance he managed to strike between the artists favoured by Dreier, and those who were of the Parisian artistic circles in which Duchamp travelled.

In tandem with his advisory role within the Société was his usefulness as a facilitator. Katherine Dreier's ambitions for the fledgling museum were far ranging, and meagrely funded. From the very beginning of the Société's operations, Duchamp enlisted the aid of friends and fellow artists. Most notably, Duchamp inveigled his closest friends, Man Ray and Francis Picabia to join the Société, and lend works to its exhibitions.

Moreover, Duchamp's social contacts and savoir faire made him an indispensable ally to Katherine Dreier. Duchamp not only had access to social circles that Dreier did not, he was also a defter negotiator. While Dreier was not incapable of persuasion or negotiation, and was even noted for her ability to organize events and get things done, many found her personality and crusading spirit to be overwhelming.<sup>579</sup> And, while Dreier may have lacked the diplomacy necessary for certain situations, she was at least sufficiently aware of this shortcoming to call upon Duchamp to act on her behalf in certain situations.

In addition to her awareness of Duchamp's subtlety and savoir faire, Katherine Dreier was also shrewdly aware of the social cachet afforded by Duchamp's very name. Almost immediately after the founding of the Société Anonyme, she began writing to artists "at the request of our President, Mr. Marcel Duchamp."<sup>580</sup> Even after he resigned from the post, Duchamp's name remained prominent in Dreier's correspondence. She managed to mention Duchamp's name at least once in nearly every letter she wrote to Museum of Modern Art Director, Alfred Barr, for the rest of her life.

## 1923 - 1936

The Société Anonyme followed its ambitious and adventurous first year by functionally ceasing operations. In June of 1921, Duchamp returned to Paris with Man Ray in tow. Katherine Dreier also departed for an eighteen month tour of China, from which she would derive material for a series of lectures and articles. Also, citing financial difficulties, the Société Anonyme relinquished the tenancy of their gallery space on East 47<sup>th</sup> Street. Duchamp returned briefly to New York in February of 1922 in order to complete work on the *Large Glass*. While there Duchamp

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<sup>579</sup> Dreier is not remembered with fondness by Man Ray in his autobiography, *Self-Portrait*, nor was she much liked by John Quinn. Judith Zilczer, 'John Quinn and Modern Art Collectors in America,' *American Art Journal*, 14 (Winter, 1982), pp. 57-71 (pp. 68-69). Likewise, Charles Sheeler claimed to have a "pronounced allergy" to her, and recounted an incident in which Walter Arensberg agreed to have lunch with her and, after postponing the engagement as long as possible, Walter "asked if I [Sheeler] wouldn't join them just to ease the situation of taking her to lunch." Friedman, 'Oral history interview with Charles Sheeler,'

<<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/sheele59.htm>> [accessed 27 March 2008].

<sup>580</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Francis and Gabrielle Picabia, 25 May 1920, Quoted in Jennifer R. Gross, 'Believe Me, Faithfully Yours,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, pp. 123-141 (p. 128).

participated in activities under the banner of the Société Anonyme, most notably the design and publication of *Some French Moderns Says McBride*, before returning to Paris, ostensibly for good, in the beginning of 1923.

Even though she was now lacking both cohorts and a base of operations, Dreier was determined not to let her fledgling organization die. She continued selling memberships to the Société, and dunning wealthy friends and associates for support.<sup>581</sup> Without rooms in which to display works though, the focus of the Société was forced to shift. While Dreier continued to organize exhibitions of modern art, she was limited by her ability to find institutions in which they could be held. As a result, the Société held fewer, though more extensive, exhibitions. Dreier also began to focus her energies upon lecturing, using her lectures as a way to display works of modern art and using exhibitions as occasions for giving lectures.

It was only in 1923, when the Société was lacking in an independent base of operations that the prospect of a Société Anonyme collection was initiated. When John Covert, the American painter and cousin of Walter Arensberg abandoned his career as a painter to take up more steady employment as a travelling salesman, he donated six of his paintings to the Société Anonyme.<sup>582</sup> The Société had previously borrowed all of the works included in its exhibitions, occasionally from artists though predominantly from Dreier's personal collection. Covert's works were the first objects that were owned by the corporation itself, separately from any of its members.

In spite of Covert's donation of these works to the Société, Dreier's record keeping frequently failed to distinguish between works acquired for herself or for the Société. The blurred boundary between the collections was exacerbated by the fact that, lacking an independent base of operations, the Société's collection was housed in Katherine Dreier's country home in Connecticut. Regardless of which of the two collections the works ultimately ended up in, the excuse of rounding out the collection

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<sup>581</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 19 April 1923 (YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317). Letter from Katherine Dreier to Louise Arensberg, 5 February 1923 (YCAL MSS 101, Box 2, Folder 55). Both in Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>582</sup> George Heard Hamilton, 'John Covert: Early American Modern,' *College Art Journal*, 2 (Autumn 1952), pp. 37-42 (p. 42).

of her museum unleashed in Dreier an appetite for the possession of modern art that occasionally exceeded that of Walter and Louise Arensberg.

Though Duchamp was in Paris for these changes, Katherine Dreier does not appear to have believed that a mere 3,000 mile distance should diminish her expectations of him. In fact, among the reasons Dreier had for continuing the operations of the Société Anonyme must have been the preservation of her relationship with Duchamp. Dreier had worked hard to maintain a patron-protégé relationship with Duchamp; supplying him with a movie camera when he wished to experiment with three-dimensional film making,<sup>583</sup> as well as acquiring such Dadaist works as *Three Standard Stoppages*, (figure 4.10) *Fresh Widow*, (figure 4.11) and *Rotary Glass Plates (Precision Optics)*.<sup>584</sup> (figure 4.12) Dreier even went so far as to secure ownership of Duchamp's magnum opus, the *Large Glass* from the Arensbergs in 1923. (figure 3.12)

With the near cessation of Duchamp's artistic output between 1923 and the start of the 1930s there was little scope for her patronage to continue. Through the continuation of Société activities, however, she was able to maintain their association. Thus, the Société Anonyme formed the framework of their relationship, and ultimately their friendship.

The early correspondence between Dreier and Duchamp is almost entirely composed of letters from Dreier, requesting that Duchamp complete some task on behalf of the Société. These requests are presumably an extension of his original role in the Société, and include such tasks as going to Ferdinand Léger's "studio and make a selection with him, so that we get a high grade of pictures."<sup>585</sup> She employs the terms "we" and "us" when making these requests, insisting upon his continued role as her partner in this venture. Her letters, boisterous and effusive, also tend to contain a

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<sup>583</sup> Man Ray, *Self-Portrait*, p. 86.

<sup>584</sup> *Fresh Widow* and *Rotary Glass Plates* were acquired by Dreier soon after they were completed in 1920. *3 Stoppages Étalon* was finished in 1913, though it was not purchased until 1918. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, nos. 376, 379 & 282, pp. 678, 681 & 594-6. Though Dreier paid Duchamp for these works, there is no evidence among the Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive to confirm how much she paid for them.

<sup>585</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 23 April 1925. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

heady dose of flattery; “Brinton offered to see Leger [*sic*] and speak to him about it and I am sure Mr. McBride would do it also, but I felt personally that I would rather have you represent the Société Anonyme than either of the other two.”<sup>586</sup>

In sharp contrast to Dreier’s admittedly long and gossipy letters, Duchamp’s responses initially were either telegraphic or nonexistent. This was a sore point with Dreier, and her earliest letters include both gentle hints: “Enclosed you will find a post card on which please drop me a line.”<sup>587</sup> And outright complaints: “I wish you would write to me, but apparently you won’t. I thought you were going to send me some postcards, but even this you have scorned to do.”<sup>588</sup> When he did respond, his letters remained strictly business-like, providing only updates on the tasks she requested of him without any additional insight into his life or activities. Much though it bothered her, Dreier does not appear to have taken Duchamp’s incommunicativeness to heart. Within one such letter, immediately after complaining that he doesn’t write she proceeded to inform him that she will be coming to visit him in Paris.<sup>589</sup>

This visit, Dreier’s 1926 trip to Paris, was part of a larger European borrowing tour in preparation for the Société Anonyme’s *International Exhibition of Modern Art* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art later that year. Dreier’s arrival rekindled their association, as her preparations for this extensive and comprehensive exhibition involved a particularly heavy reliance upon Duchamp. Dreier expected Duchamp to act as her emissary in Europe; he travelled to Italy to speak with the Futurists in addition to speaking with a multiplicity of artists and dealers in Paris. Duchamp appears to have been largely responsible for the selection of French, Dutch and Italian works on display in the exhibition. He purchased work by Georges Braque for the show,<sup>590</sup> selected works from the studios of Theo Van Doesburg and Georges

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<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

<sup>588</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 19 June 1925. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 27 April 1926. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.



Vantongerloo,<sup>591</sup> and dissuaded Dreier from including work by Picasso because “the Picassos sell here for 250 000 francs and I don’t think very necessary to have such successfully marketed stuff in your exhibition of efforts\_”<sup>592</sup>

The selection of works was not the extent of her expectations of Duchamp. He was also expected to make shipping arrangements for the works, arrange for the packaging and shipping of sculptures, and have frames made for the artwork. Duchamp ended up bringing the Italian paintings to the exhibition by hand when an exhibition of Brancusi’s sculpture necessitated a fortuitously timed trip to the United States.<sup>593</sup> Finally, Dreier also expected Duchamp to produce “biographical sketches” on at least some of the artists represented for the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition.<sup>594</sup>

In addition to the favours that Dreier requested in conjunction with the Brooklyn exhibition, she also had Duchamp engage in slightly more varied tasks such as arranging for a representative of a museum in Buffalo, New York to view a painting by Cézanne for potential purchase.<sup>595</sup> Dreier arranged for Duchamp to receive a selection of six etchings by Charles Méryon, originally owned by Victor Hugo, which she wished him to research and have appraised for future sale.<sup>596</sup> Dreier was not the only one making requests, however, as Duchamp simultaneously used his influence with Dreier to ensure that Antoine Pevsner’s recently completed *Portrait of*

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 3 July 1926. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Duchamp’s underlining. See note 325.

<sup>593</sup> The exhibition of Brancusi’s work in question was the 1927 exhibition at the Arts Club of Chicago. Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 19 September 1926. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>594</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 2 June 1926. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>595</sup> It is not immediately clear who owned the Cézanne, and thus for whose benefit this has been arranged. Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 27 April 1926. Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 7 May 1926. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>596</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 27 April 1926. Letter from Katherine Dreier to Miss Busch, 14 December 1926. Letter Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 12 Jan 1927. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

*Marcel Duchamp* was not only included in the exhibition, but then purchased by the *Société Anonyme*.<sup>597</sup> (figure 4.13)

What was most remarkable about Dreier and Duchamp's correspondence is the meticulous records Duchamp kept of exactly what had been spent and by whom. As Dreier's representative in Europe, Duchamp was expected not only to make arrangements on her behalf, but occasionally to pay for them as well. Throughout the exhibition preparation, and for the remainder of their friendship, Duchamp would keep a tally of the debts he and Dreier owed one another, cancelling them one against the other. This was in no sense a one way arrangement, with the earliest instance thereof being the purchase of Pevsner's portrait bust. While Pevsner was asking \$300 for the sculpture, Duchamp proposed that Dreier put the \$200 that she owed Duchamp for the purchase of frames and shipping towards the new work, rather than paying him back directly.<sup>598</sup> Such exchanges were frequent, with money and artworks equally viable forms of currency.

The implicit trust in Duchamp's judgement demonstrated throughout the preparations for the Brooklyn exhibition remained evident throughout their friendship. Nothing that Duchamp ever suggested to her was rejected, and while his lack of approval or indifference would not greatly hamper her enthusiasm for an artist or idea, she was nonetheless always desirous of his stamp of approval. The extent of her reliance upon Duchamp's approval is illustrated by her 1936 purchase of a small work by Piet Mondrian. While Dreier was a great fan of Mondrian's work, Duchamp was less enthusiastic. She wrote, almost apologetically to Duchamp that "I bought a little Mondrian. I jus[t] had to. I do wish that you liked him"<sup>599</sup> Duchamp and Mondrian had met at least as early as 1926, yet a decade later she still expresses a plaintive desire for Duchamp's approval of Mondrian's work, and by extension, approval of her appreciation of it.

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<sup>597</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 27 April 1926. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>598</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 3 July 1926. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 317. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>599</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, January 1936. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 321. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

**“a wonderful vacation in my past life”<sup>600</sup>**

Duchamp’s return to the United States in May of 1936 was necessitated by a number of simultaneous projects. His primary obligation was the repair of his *Large Glass*, (figure 3.12) which had become damaged following the Société Anonyme’s Brooklyn exhibition. Movers had laid the upper and lower panels of the *Large Glass* flat atop one another within a large crate when transporting the work between the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and Katherine Dreier’s home in rural Connecticut. The vibrations caused by travel over the ill-paved country roads caused the *Large Glass* to dissolve into thousands of tiny shards. This damage, incurred in 1927, went undetected for years while the crate stood in storage, and was only detected two months before Dreier departed for Europe in 1931.

Dreier, deeply upset by the discovery, waited to tell Duchamp of the disaster in person. Duchamp, however, remained surprisingly calm at the discovery that his masterpiece, which had occupied him for more than a decade, had been broken. Rather, as he later recalled, he consoled the distraught Dreier instead.<sup>601</sup> “I was a little sorry, that big thing. I didn’t know how much it was broken, whether it could be repaired or not. But on principle I was not going to cry. Because, after all, it had no value in the artistic world at that time, nobody cared for it, nobody saw it or even knew about it.”<sup>602</sup> One may attribute his principled refusal to cry over broken glass to Duchamp’s oft-cited notion of the “beauty of indifference.”<sup>603</sup> This may also explain the further five-year wait before Duchamp returned to the United States to mend the work.

In addition to the Herculean task of reassembling the two panes of glass, Duchamp was also embarking upon a plan he had hatched nearly a year earlier. Mentioned for the first time in a letter to Katherine Dreier, Duchamp had decided to

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<sup>600</sup> This was Duchamp’s description of his 1936 trip to the United States. Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 4 September 1936. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 321. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>601</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 288.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid., pp. 288-289.

create “an album of approximately all the things I produced.”<sup>604</sup> This “album” would eventually evolve into his *Boîte-en-Valise*, (figure 5.36) a suitcase containing meticulously recreated miniature versions of sixty-nine of his most significant creations. Thus, the second objective of his trip to the United States was to visit with his two patrons in order to photograph and take notes on as many of his works as possible.

For Katherine Dreier, there was yet another objective to this visit. At fifty-nine years old she had begun to worry about the ultimate fate of her art collection. The Société Anonyme, though still organizing exhibitions and hosting lectures, had not had a home of its own since 1923. Without a base of operations for the Société, it was difficult to solicit the necessary members and donations required to make the organization self-perpetuating. It was not merely the fate of the Société’s collection that concerned her, as her own collection of modern art had become equally substantial in size, if not consistently so in quality.

Dreier hinted at this nascent concern several months before Duchamp’s visit, musing in one letter: “I sometimes wonder what will happen before I die. I still have 23 years for I expect to pass on in my eighty-first year. If I am as slow as I am now I don’t think that my work will be complete before then.”<sup>605</sup> While generally healthy, she was beginning to feel the effects of a circulatory problem that beset her legs and would make mobility increasingly difficult for her. These concerns about the future were not as idle as she let on, however. Two factors, one personal and the other financial, were creating a sense of urgency in Dreier’s mind. The first such factor was a deeply competitive urge regarding the activities of the Museum of Modern Art. Founded nine years after the Société Anonyme, Dreier and many others viewed the well funded MoMA as having usurped the role of the Société and overshadowed many of its accomplishments.<sup>606</sup> In April of 1936, MoMA declared its intention to

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<sup>604</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 31 December 1934. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 320. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>605</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, January 1936. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 321. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>606</sup> Letter from John Storrs to Katherine Dreier, 15 May 1949. Quoted in Gross, ‘An Artists’ Museum,’ in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 13.

build a permanent museum for its collection, something that the Société Anonyme had yet to accomplish and which greatly annoyed Dreier.<sup>607</sup>

From a more practical standpoint, Dreier was finding the maintenance of her expansive country estate in West Redding, Connecticut to be increasingly burdensome. Despite her adoration of “The Haven,” the buildings and grounds of which had been designed and decorated so as to display her extensive collection,<sup>608</sup> she had begun to seek tenants for other buildings on the estate to offset her expenses. It has been suggested that Dreier was hit hard by the depression.<sup>609</sup> While this may be true in a limited sense, she maintained a comfortable lifestyle, keeping an apartment in Manhattan on Fifth Avenue in addition to her country home at the Haven, all the while continuing to voraciously collect modern art. Rather, Dreier’s continuing financial difficulties stemmed from poor financial management skills, and a continual difficulty living within her otherwise ample means.<sup>610</sup> Much like Duchamp’s other patron, Walter Arensberg, Dreier’s passion for modern art was all consuming, leading both to purchase art at a rate that threatened their desired standard of living. Thus, by 1936, Dreier was also desirous of a solution that would permit her to retain the Haven, while freeing her to continue collecting artwork for the Société Anonyme.

The solution that presented itself to Dreier was that of a “Country Museum,” which would combine “Art in the home and the garden...a part of everyday life... brought into the lives of our rural community, who can come and see it at leisure...without undue exertion.”<sup>611</sup> Dreier must have taken the opportunity of

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<sup>607</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 4 April 1936. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 321. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>608</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 21 April 1930. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 319. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>609</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 287. Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 58.

<sup>610</sup> Dreier’s awareness of this shortcoming is indicated in a letter from Duchamp, in which he congratulates her for “living within her budget,” indicating that there had been previous discussion between them on this point. Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 31 December 1934 (YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 320). Also mentioned in a letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 19 July 1938 (YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323). Duchamp even offers her extensive, though general, financial advice, letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 27 July 1938 (YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323). All are in Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>611</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to William M. Hekking, 26 July 1936. Reprinted in Elise K. Kenney, ‘The Société Anonyme Collection Comes to Yale,’ in *The Société Anonyme: Modernism for America*, ed. by Jennifer R. Gross (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 143-155 (pp. 143-144).

Duchamp's visit to introduce him to her still amorphous plan of converting the Haven into a museum. While no conclusions were reached regarding the Country Museum during his visit, Duchamp took this opportunity to encourage Dreier to definitively establish which of the artworks in her possession belonged to the Société and which belonged to her. The resulting legal contract set aside forty-five objects as the specific content of the Société Anonyme, and established Dreier and Duchamp as the joint trustees of that collection.<sup>612</sup>

Though Dreier would continue to add works to the list, the act of legally distinguishing the two collections was nonetheless significant. On the one hand, it served as Duchamp's expression of tacit disapproval of the Country Museum plan. Duchamp rightly understood that the logistical and financial shortcomings of this plan were almost certainly too great for her to overcome. This can be seen in the fact that all of his own works remained in Katherine Dreier's personal collection, rather than that of the Société. We can safely assume that Duchamp's advice during this visit was similar to that he would repeat to Dreier later: "Preserve the ownership of some things\_ Lend them if you wish\_"<sup>613</sup> Moreover, Dreier's constant reassurances that works such as the *Large Glass* and *Tu m'* "[are] of course mine"<sup>614</sup> indicate the frequency and urgency of Duchamp's requests that Dreier not include his works in her Société Anonyme or Country Museum plans.

Additionally, the legal division of the collection provided Duchamp with a degree of security and control over the fate of both collections. Duchamp understood that Dreier's desire to establish the Country Museum, in addition to being a financial solution, was the culmination of her aspirations for the Société Anonyme. So desirous was she to see the educational programme of the Société become a self-perpetuating institution that she would not have hesitated to relinquish control of the Société's collection or merge it with another collection if she believed it would bring her institutional dream closer to reality. Similarly, Duchamp understood that by

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<sup>612</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>613</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 8 August 1939. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Duchamp's underlining. See note 325.

<sup>614</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 18 October 1939. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

designating two distinct collections, Dreier was afforded the freedom and ability to pursue long term goals for the disposal of the Société Anonyme collection while holding her personal collection in abeyance. Should she relinquish control over the Société's collection, her private collection would thus remain intact until the longevity of the project could be proven, and would remain safe if it should fail.

In one regard the separation of Dreier's private collection and the Société Anonyme's collection remained indistinct. Dreier was able to "donate" works from her private collection to the Société Anonyme, and frequently did. Moreover, as she envisioned donating her private collection to Country Museum at her death, she was wont to treat the two collections as one when discussing the project. Duchamp remained confident that she would not go against his wishes, however, and reiterated the importance of retaining possession of the most important works, loaning them to the project until its success was proven.

Katherine Dreier was not the only one whose mind had turned towards the long term fate of their collection by 1936. This trip saw similar discussions with Walter and Louise Arensberg during his week long trip to California. Duchamp's time with the Arensbergs was no more forthcoming in terms of concrete plans than was his sojourn at the Haven. The trip to California did have one significant conclusion though, Duchamp came away from the trip having decided, if privately, that the Arensbergs' collection would be the site of his "monument."<sup>615</sup>

The decision to throw in his lot with the Arensbergs was almost certainly determined by the simple fact that the Arensbergs already had a larger array of Duchamp's works,<sup>616</sup> and more disposable income to spend on rounding out that collection than did Katherine Dreier. Despite the immutability of his decision, Duchamp did not inform Dreier of the role he had taken on with regard to the Arensbergs' collection. Whether this decision was borne of tact or duplicity, Duchamp was all too aware of the longstanding tension between his two patrons and

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<sup>615</sup> As Walter would describe the resulting collection a decade later: "In a way, therefore, the museum will be a monument to you, and the presence of all the other things will serve as a means of defining how completely individual is your contribution to the art of the twentieth century." Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 11 January 1945. Box 6, Folder 29, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>616</sup> As of August 1936, the Arensbergs' collection contained at least 21 works by Duchamp.

knew that Dreier would have been deeply offended by Duchamp's decision. This did not, however, prevent him from keeping Dreier informed of the Arensbergs' plans for their collection, a topic in which she was extremely interested.

Ever since her purchase of the *Large Glass* from the Arensbergs in 1923, Dreier had coveted the Arensbergs' position as Duchamp's dominant patrons. Even though her financial situation in 1923 was such that she requested to pay the \$2,000 cost of the *Large Glass* in "deferred payments" of \$500 every six months, within six months of making the initial instalment she inquired as to whether any other works by Duchamp might also be available.<sup>617</sup> Walter's response, that "[t]here is nothing I have of Marcel's which will ever be for sale, and I still regret the necessities of space and distance which obliged me to sell the glass,"<sup>618</sup> effectively quashed any possibility of Dreier usurping the Arensbergs' position. In the same letter, however, Arensberg provided Dreier with a glimmer of hope:

But I want to tell you that since sold it had to be, I am happy that it is with you, and that you are contemplating a permanent provision for it. I hope that I may see you at a not too distant date, and hear more of your plans for a permanent collection. It is just conceivable that your plan might have a bearing on some of my own, in regard to the ultimate destination of my pictures.<sup>619</sup>

Dreier likely had this earlier comment in mind when she made the following tentative proposal to Duchamp as soon as he returned home to France in the autumn of 1936:

I have been thinking a great deal about the completion of the idea of the Societe Anonyme [*sic*] and of the Arensberg's desire to make a small museum of yours and Brancusi's things.

The thought which came to me and which I want you to think about – is –

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<sup>617</sup> The sum of \$2,000 in 1923 would have the approximate buying power of \$25, 092.05 today. Likewise, \$500 in 1923 would have the approximate buying power of \$ 6,273.01 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>618</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Katherine Dreier, 19 March 1924. YCAL MSS 101, Box 2, Folder 56. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.



And it came as a result of the Glass – why not turn the Haven into a museum after my death and have the Arensbergs build their museum in the meadow where the vegetable garden now is.

Then the Library with the Glass and the mural [*Tu m'*] would be kept in tact and could be used as a reference library – and the rest of your things would be in the museum across the road which the Arensbergs would build.

It would be situated in beautiful grounds and Brancusi's pieces which are in the garden would be a perfect setting for the approach.<sup>620</sup>

Such a solution was, to Katherine Dreier's mind, ideal. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to Dreier, the Arensbergs were no more in a position to finance the founding of a museum than Dreier was. More importantly, the Arensbergs were still intent upon using their collection to foster an appreciation of modern art on the west coast. Lacking in both financial backing and a viable plan for the Haven and the collection, Dreier began to despair for the "white elephant" with which she had been burdened, even suggesting that "it might be better to sell everything and return the gifts to their owners."<sup>621</sup>

The first glimmer of hope regarding a union of her collection with the Arensbergs' came in 1938, with Sidney Janis's suggestion of a Museum of Modern Art of Los Angeles, which would be loosely affiliated with the Museum of Modern Art in New York.<sup>622</sup> The collection of this museum would have had, as its core, his own collection along with those of the Arensbergs, Dreier and the Société Anonyme. Additionally, Janis claimed that Ruth Maitland, Galka Scheyer, and Edward G. Robinson were also considering donating their art collections, once the museum had been established.<sup>623</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 20 October 1936. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 321. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Dreier regularly referred to the painting *Tu m'* as her "mural."

<sup>621</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, [2] July 1937. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 322. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>622</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 13 January 1938. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>623</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 265.

For a variety of reasons Janis's ill-fated plan very swiftly came to nothing.<sup>624</sup> One of the chief reasons for its failure was Katherine Dreier's decision to withdraw her collection. This decision was based on a variety of factors. First, the association with MoMA had tainted the proposed museum in Dreier's eyes.<sup>625</sup> Her sense of resentment towards MoMA ran deep, as did her ideological differences with an organization that she had recently described as possessing "neither love nor intelligence regarding art."<sup>626</sup> Compounding the problems for Dreier was the fact that Sidney Janis was Jewish.<sup>627</sup> Dreier's inclination towards anti-Semitism made it difficult for her to trust Janis as an individual or as the director of the proposed museum.

The most substantial problem for Dreier, however, was that the proposed museum was to be in Los Angeles. In addition to leaving the problem of the Haven unsolved, the distance of more than two thousand miles between Los Angeles and her home in Connecticut meant that she would not have any real input into the development of the proposed museum. Dreier was not capable of fully relinquishing control of the institution and collection that she had shepherded for nearly two decades. As she wrote to Duchamp, "I thought at this distance I could not help to control it – and unless Arensberg became unexpectedly active – Janis and his Jewish Group would have complete control. No the distance is far too unsurmountable. [*sic*]"<sup>628</sup>

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<sup>624</sup> Janis appears to have exaggerated the level of commitment he had obtained from all of his major contributors, effectively assuring each party of the others' commitment in order to secure commitment to his plan. No more than days after writing to assure Walter of the commitment of Dreier and Alfred Barr to the project, both Dreier and MoMA pulled out. Letter from Sidney Janis to Walter Arensberg, 5 January 1938. Box 6, Folder 8, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. Also, letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 13 January 1938. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. For more information on Janis's failed project, see Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' pp. 263-267.

<sup>625</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 266.

<sup>626</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 4 April 1936. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 321. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>627</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 266.

<sup>628</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 13 January 1938. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

While Janis's project failed, the interest garnered by Janis gave Dreier new hope for her original plan for a Country Museum. With this goal in mind Dreier made contact with her old friend William M. Hekking, who had recently been hired as the Director of the Division of Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art.<sup>629</sup> He was excited and intrigued by her ideas for a rural, domestically scaled museum, but his position in Los Angeles prevented him from helping her to realize her goals. Without any assistance Dreier soon slipped back to despair; debating "whether to give [the collection] to several museums or whether to sell it by auction – or what."<sup>630</sup>

In Dreier's mind, the idea of giving her collection to any museum at all was becoming increasingly distasteful. Not only was she at odds with the operational ethos of MoMA, which promoted a more academically rigorous approach to understanding art than that favoured by Dreier, she was finding that no institution was in line with her experimental and proselytizing views on museology. As Dreier lamented, "just another museum [of] the present-day type would really not interest me – we would have to think out a new form which would bring Art truly to the people – for I did not think that either the present-day museum nor the [WPA] murals met that need."<sup>631</sup> For Dreier, it was not merely a question of finding someone who would care for and maintain the physical collection, what she fundamentally wanted was an organization which would carry on the mission of the Société Anonyme in perpetuity.

William M. Hekking's departure from the Los Angeles County Museum in August 1939 finally provided Dreier with the impetus to make her Country Museum a reality. During his eighteen-month tenure in Los Angeles Hekking had managed to increase the art collection of the Los Angeles Museum by two and a half million

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<sup>629</sup> Katherine Dreier & William Hekking, "The Country Museum," project proposal brochure, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, n.p. YCAL MSS 101, Box 60, Folder 1626. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Kenney, 'The Société Anonyme Collection,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 145.

<sup>630</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 9 July 1939. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

dollars worth of donations,<sup>632</sup> and had charmed many of the area's major collectors. Ultimately however, he found the cultural attitudes in California to be as frustrating as many of his contemporaries did, and the hopes of collectors such as the Arensbergs; that "he will stay here and be given authority to really accomplish what he wants to do\_"<sup>633</sup> went unfulfilled.

No longer tied to the west coast, Hekking revisited Dreier's proposal from the previous year. He remained intrigued by Dreier's ideas on art education, and shared her disdain for the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>634</sup> Most importantly though, Hekking could bring to the Country Museum project two things that had been woefully missing from the Société Anonyme; namely Hekking's experience in museum administration and fundraising. With such assistance, Dreier was finally able to flesh out the idea with which she had merely been flirting for three years.

Certain changes had occurred since Dreier had first proposed the idea of the Country Museum in 1936, all of which would have an effect on the formulation of the museum plan. Most importantly, Dreier was no longer of the belief that she could count upon living into her eighty-first year, which lent an added urgency to the project. Moreover, she now wished to have the Country Museum up and running during her life, for "if we could get this idea up and running while I was still on this planet than it would be more to all of our satisfaction than if we waited until I was dead."<sup>635</sup> The circulatory problems in her legs, which were the dominant cause for reassessing her health and longevity, also caused her to re-envision her role within the Country Museum project. Rather than spearheading the Country Museum as she had the Société Anonyme, Dreier hoped now to take on a more advisory role. As she

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<sup>632</sup> Katherine Dreier & William Hekking, "The Country Museum," project proposal brochure, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, n.p. YCAL MSS 101, Box 60, Folder 1626. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>633</sup> Letter from Louise Arensberg to Katherine Dreier, 2 January [1937 or 1938]. YCAL MSS 101, Box 2, Folder 55. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. For more on the cultural attitudes toward modern art in California, see chapters three and five.

<sup>634</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Silent Guard",' p. 267.

<sup>635</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 1 August 1939. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323, Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

wrote to Duchamp, “I am withdrawing but with a man like Mr. Hekking in charge – I would always be listened to IN CASE I HAVE SOMETHING to suggest.”<sup>636</sup>

Despite these changes, Dreier was positively elated as she wrote to Duchamp that a solution had been found, both for her collection and the Haven. “It would be a wonderful thing to have this house become a Museum – for it would mean that all the work of Love which I put into it will be preserved.”<sup>637</sup> Moreover, her confidence in Hekking’s sympathy of spirit and professional competency left her convinced that the revived Country Museum plan would be a success.

Dreier’s ebullient confidence was so strong that even Duchamp’s disapproval, reminiscent of his reservations from 1936, was not enough to dampen her spirits. Duchamp was qualifiedly approving of Dreier’s plan to sell the Haven as a museum, and of Mr Hekking, whom he had met ten years before. Duchamp was, however, more ardent in his disapproval of the possible donation of Dreier’s private collection to the Country Museum. Duchamp strenuously reiterated the concerns he had only hinted at three years previously, when he insisted that Dreier officially separate the Société Anonyme from her private collection:

if you are to abandon all your collection with it, I have a certain apprehension....

So I suggest that you might sell the house and the collection of the Société Anonyme with it as the basis of the Country Museum.

Outside of that, you might loan them your private collection (including my glass) with the faculty of withdrawing any piece of the collection (glass included) whenever you decide.

You might later on decide to make a gift of it to the Museum if it turned to be a serious affair\_ But at least I would keep a chance of saving something if this museum turned out to be the wrong thing.

Preserve the ownership of some things\_ Lend them if you wish\_<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>636</sup> Ibid. Dreier’s capitalization.

<sup>637</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 18 October 1939. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>638</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 8 August 1939. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Duchamp’s underlining. See note 325.

As ever, Dreier took Duchamp's suggestions to heart. It had certainly been her intention to include the *Large Glass* and *Tu m'* amongst the founding gift to the Country Museum, "for it was [the] Glass that turned this house into a museum."<sup>639</sup> Following Duchamp's plea, however, she continually reiterated her retained ownership of the two works. Nonetheless, she did retain hope in Duchamp's consent for her to loan the works to the Country Museum. As she assured Duchamp, "Your beautiful mural *Tu m'* and your wonderful Glass is of course mine," adding, "but I imagine that I must leave both here – for they make the room."<sup>640</sup> Though she would never have gone against the wishes of her friend, she did attempt to gently reconcile him to her desire to include his works in the Country Museum by treating such a decision as a mere exigency of taste and circumstance. She would later reiterate this point, insisting, "I shall miss my mural [*Tu m'*] terribly – but it meant parting with it only a few years sooner – and I know that it is well cared for and in as permanent a place as anything in this world."<sup>641</sup>

Despite Duchamp's concerns, Dreier remained confident that her Country Museum would not turn out to be "the wrong thing." She was so confident that, in early 1940 she hired Hekking to the position of Curator of the Country Museum.<sup>642</sup> Hekking, for his part, had also stated that he was "willing to stake his reputation and go out to raise the necessary money wherewith to carry it out."<sup>643</sup> Money remained the dominant obstacle for the founding of the Museum, as Dreier could not afford to donate the Haven to the organization. Hekking, undaunted, took out an option on the estate soon after being hired to head the Museum.<sup>644</sup> He also swiftly initiated talks with the DuPont chemical company in hopes that, with large factories in the nearby towns of Bridgeport and Danbury, they would be interested in subsidizing the

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<sup>639</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 1 August 1939. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>640</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 18 October 1939. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>641</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 12 May 1940. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>642</sup> Kenney, 'The Société Anonyme Collection,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 145.

<sup>643</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 11 February 1940. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid.

publicly-minded Country Museum.<sup>645</sup> Simultaneously, Hekking pursued a “collection of old Masters which he believes he can swing to [the Country Museum],”<sup>646</sup> as well as an equally promising collection of Greek and Roman art.<sup>647</sup> Finally, the pair drafted an extensive brochure for the proposed Museum in order to assist them in swaying other collectors and securing additional sources of funding.

Dreier was so sure of the success of this venture that, even as the war in Europe was spreading about him, she telegraphed Duchamp and instructed him to send a declaration of consent regarding the donation of the Société Anonyme collection to the Country Museum.<sup>648</sup> While Duchamp complied with Dreier’s wishes, his reservations about the viability of the project are still evident in his response, which concludes with the clause: “This consent will be effective only when the country museum is established.”<sup>649</sup>

As Duchamp was surely aware, money was not the only obstacle facing the Country Museum. Fundamental to the problems that would beset the proposed institution was the fact that the Haven was a domestic residence in a secluded rural community. In addition to the substantial problems raised by the house not being either fireproofed or designed for museum circulation, its location in West Redding, Connecticut was simply too remote to be practical. Contrary to the claims made in the Country Museum’s brochure, the Connecticut valleys were not “literally in the cultural center of the United States.”<sup>650</sup> Rather, Redding was a distant and affluent suburb of New York City, connected by rail for most of its 60 mile distance. Dreier

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<sup>645</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 18 October 1939. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>646</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 11 February 1940. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>647</sup> Katherine Dreier & William Hekking, “The Country Museum,” project proposal brochure, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, n.p. YCAL MSS 101, Box 60, Folder 1626. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>648</sup> Handwritten draft of telegram from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, dated 25 February 1940. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>649</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 29 February 1940. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>650</sup> Katherine Dreier & William Hekking, “The Country Museum,” project proposal brochure, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, n.p. YCAL MSS 101, Box 60, Folder 1626. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

tried to play this feature to her advantage, insisting that “[w]ith the advent of the automobile, excellent roads, electric power, telephone, radio, etc., the country is rapidly becoming more populated by people who hunger for, yes, demand some of the cultural advantages of urban life.”<sup>651</sup> In practice however, this proved a hard point to sell.

After only a few months, Hekking’s hopes for the Country Museum project were fading, and by the summer of 1940 he withdrew from his curatorial role.<sup>652</sup> He did continue his enthusiasm for the project, though, and in September of that year he extolled the virtues of the Country Museum and its collection to Everett Victor Meeks, the dean of the School of Fine Arts at Yale, and Theodore Sizer, the director of the Yale University Art Gallery.<sup>653</sup> Though Meeks found the Country Museum plan to be impractical, Sizer’s interest in the collection was piqued. When writing to Dreier about the meeting, Hekking described Sizer as a “live wire.”<sup>654</sup>

In the beginning of 1941, Dreier presented her Country Museum idea to the president of Yale University, Charles Seymour, hoping that the University would take on sponsorship of the institution at the Haven.<sup>655</sup> Seymour was also interested, and recommended that she arrange to meet with Sizer upon his return from Australia later that summer. Dreier spent the intervening time continuing to hunt for the financial support necessary to establish the Country Museum, and continuing to extol the virtues of her plan to Sizer.<sup>656</sup> With war continuing to rage in Europe, however, financial support of the size Dreier desired was increasingly difficult to find.

Sizer was already familiar with the work of the Société Anonyme when he finally managed to visit with Katherine Dreier at the Haven in July of 1941. Though, as he wrote to Dreier, “I was unprepared, I must confess, to discover the extent and

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<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

<sup>652</sup> Kenney, ‘The Société Anonyme Collection,’ in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 145.

<sup>653</sup> Ibid.

<sup>654</sup> Letter from Hekking to Katherine Dreier, 25 September 1940. Quoted in Kenney, ‘The Société Anonyme Collection,’ in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 145.

<sup>655</sup> Kenney, ‘The Société Anonyme Collection,’ in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 145.

<sup>656</sup> In Katherine Dreier’s letter to Theodore Sizer of 12 July 1941, she claims to have found a donor willing to take on the cost of purchasing the Haven for the Country Museum, though she doesn’t specify who this might be. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.



quality of the collection.”<sup>657</sup> Since its legal inception in 1936 with forty-five explicitly designated works, the Société’s collection had grown more than tenfold, now numbering 481 objects.<sup>658</sup> Despite his desire for the Société’s collection, Sizer did not believe that Yale would be willing to fund her Country Museum in order to get it. “As I see it,” explained Sizer,

the whole thing boils down to a matter of cost: a suggested budget of \$30,000 a year would mean an endowment of a million or a million and a half, which would be difficult if not impossible to secure in these abnormal times. It would be simpler to raise funds for curating, publishing and interpreting the collection than to carry out the independent establishment you have envisioned.<sup>659</sup>

As of 1941, Yale University owned only two abstract paintings, George L. K. Morris’s *Composition* of 1938, (figure 4.14) and Charles Greene Shaw’s *Plastic Abstraction* from the same year.<sup>660</sup> (figure 4.15) Sizer was acutely aware of how valuable the addition of the Société Anonyme collection would be to Yale. He was also aware of the potential pitfalls attendant to his negotiations with Dreier. One week after his trip to Haven, Sizer wrote to President Seymour that the “lady is difficult, but her collection is worth the expenditure of time and trouble.”<sup>661</sup> Sizer expanded upon this sentiment to Wilmarth Lewis, a member of the Yale Museum and Library Committee: “Were the lady to set no conditions we could afford to swallow a lot (& let a large portion of the collection lie dormant for better times)... but she (far smarter than superficially apparant [*sic*]) quite properly wants it used in all sorts of (interesting) ways - & we to pay the bill.”<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>657</sup> Letter from Theodore Sizer to Katherine Dreier, 22 July 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>658</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Theodore Sizer, 26 November 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>659</sup> Letter from Theodore Sizer to Katherine Dreier, 22 July 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>660</sup> Kenney, ‘The Société Anonyme Collection,’ in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 145.

<sup>661</sup> Letter from Theodore Sizer to Charles Seymour, 23 July 1941. RU 23, Box 61, Folder 534. Charles Seymour, President of Yale University, Records. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Quoted in Kenney, ‘The Société Anonyme Collection,’ in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 146.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid.

In addition to these obstacles, Sizer also divined the strategy by which Yale would pursue the Société Anonyme collection. Observing that Katherine Dreier “likes much attention - & you can load the compliments on with a trowel... so long as we land this fish;”<sup>663</sup> Sizer launched a charm offensive. This entailed an almost immediate second visit to the Haven, a flurry of complimentary letters and a detailed argument outlining how a donation to Yale was the most effective and efficient way of achieving the primary goals of both the Société Anonyme and the Country Museum.

Dreier made one last play for her Country Museum plan by offering what she considered to be her ace in the hole. Though she had assured Duchamp that she would maintain possession of the *Large Glass*, she hinted to Sizer that accepting her Country Museum proposal would guarantee Yale the gift of the *Large Glass*, and by extension, the remainder of her extensive private collection.

There is only one serious problem as... I understand your suggestion in your first letter – you do not mention the Big Glass – which we all feel is the pinnacle of the whole collection, and which Stieglitz and many others consider the most important contribution to Art this Century has produced and which people from all over the world come to see.

The glass having met with one so serious, I hesitate to subject it to another dangerouse [*sic*] voyage, as I consider it too fragile for a derrick to move. Had you given this any thought?<sup>664</sup>

This leading question was then followed by the suggestion that Yale consider running the Country Museum for a five-year trial period.

Much though Sizer undoubtedly wanted the *Large Glass* for Yale, Dreier’s ploy was necessarily unsuccessful. As Sizer mentioned in his earlier letter, converting the Haven into a museum was not financially practical. Sizer explained that “It would probably be found more expedient and perhaps cheaper to erect a new building at The Haven than to fire-proof completely your charming residence, which, too, is really not

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<sup>663</sup> Ibid.

<sup>664</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Theodore Sizer, 26 July 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Dreier’s underlining.

adapted for mass circulation.”<sup>665</sup> He pointed out, however, that the “property maintenance and expense of custodians, could be taken care of were the collection in New Haven.”<sup>666</sup> Sizer further asserted that, were the collection in New Haven, Yale University would already be ideally suited to carry out the educational aspirations of the Country Museum, and it would be “easily and conveniently accessible to practicing artists, scholars, school children and the general public.”<sup>667</sup> Finally, Sizer stressed Yale’s privileged position as a private university, “unencumbered by governmental politics,” declaring it to be “as sure and as intelligent an agency as we have in this great country of ours for the execution and perpetuity of the proposition which you have so generously brought to our attention.”<sup>668</sup>

Sizer’s persistence paid off faster than anyone could have imagined. Less than a month after his initial visit to the Haven, Theodore Sizer and Wilmarth Lewis met again with Katherine Dreier to discuss the terms upon which the collection of the Société Anonyme would be presented to Yale University.<sup>669</sup> As Sizer had observed, Dreier did want the Société collection to be used “in all sorts of (interesting) ways.” He had managed to allay many of her concerns about Yale’s willingness or ability to make active use of the collection, even convincing her to hand over “complete charge of the educational side of this Collection.”<sup>670</sup> Dreier was nonetheless incapable of relinquishing control of the collection, and stipulated that the Société retained the right to organize exhibitions “from time to time... which they would help to finance with Yale – but Yale circulating them afterwards.”<sup>671</sup>

Dreier further insisted upon retaining control over the use of the collection by stipulating that, if established, her Country Museum would be permitted to borrow

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<sup>665</sup> Letter from Theodore Sizer to Katherine Dreier, 4 August 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid.

<sup>669</sup> The span of time between his initial visit (16 July 1941) and the visit at which concrete terms of gift were discussed (7 August 1941) was a mere twenty-two days.

<sup>670</sup> Katherine Dreier, ‘Report of the Conference held at the home of Mr, Lewis, at Farmington Connecticut – August 7<sup>th</sup> – 1941,’ accompanying a letter from Katherine Dreier to Theodore Sizer, 10 August 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid.

freely from the donated collection.<sup>672</sup> Though Yale had not been willing to acquiesce to Dreier's plan and provide the necessary funding for her Country Museum she was not yet ready to abandon the idea entirely. As the Société's collection was to be the core of her institution, Duchamp having asked her not to commit her personal collection, the complete loss of the Société Anonyme collection substantially dented the viability of the Country Museum.

While she was unable to convince Yale to underwrite her proposed museum, Dreier did take advantage of Yale's desire for the Société's collection. Since her extensive catalogue of the Société Anonyme's 1926 Brooklyn exhibition, Dreier had harboured the desire to create a comprehensive catalogue of all of the works in the Société Anonyme collection. The catalogue envisioned by Dreier was to be more than a listing of the works in the Société's collection. What Dreier desired was a catalogue that included a brief biographical sketch of every artist represented in the collection, an accompanying photograph of their best work, as well as a photographic record and exhibition history for all of the works in the collection.<sup>673</sup> All of this was to be the responsibility of Yale University. Dreier did agree to continue covering the salary of Frederick Hartt, whom she had recently hired to complete the research for this catalogue, but all other expenses would fall to Yale.<sup>674</sup>

Even with these conditions attached, the Yale Corporation voted to accept the gift of the Société Anonyme collection on 11 October 1941.<sup>675</sup> Dreier began arranging the transfer of works almost immediately, with all 479 works of the Société's collection not on loan finally arriving in the possession of Yale University by the 26<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>676</sup> Soon after the gift was accepted, Dreier wrote to Yale's president Charles Seymour to express her gratitude:

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<sup>672</sup> Ibid.

<sup>673</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to TheodoreSizer, 5 November 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>674</sup> Katherine Dreier, 'Report of the Conference held at the home of Mr. Lewis, at Farmington Connecticut – August 7<sup>th</sup> – 1941,' accompanying a letter from Katherine Dreier to TheodoreSizer, 10 August 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>675</sup> Kenney, 'The Société Anonyme Collection,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 147.

<sup>676</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to TheodoreSizer, 26 November 1941. At the time, two works were on loan: a painting by Juan Miro, *Le Reversement*, and Antoine Pevsner's *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (letter from Katherine Dreier to TheodoreSizer, 28 October 1941). Elise Kenny has claimed that the

The Collection has been assembled, guarded and sent out on its mission during the past twenty-one years with so much love, in which many artists joined, that we are happy to have it where it will continue to do its work. We all tried to be true to our aim, incorporated in our name, The Société Anonyme, which was first of all to promote Art and not personalities, and, secondly, to spread understanding of the new forms of art which the coming era was creating. Therefore, it seems to both Mr. Duchamp and myself a very marvellous ending to have the Collection housed in perpetuity, where thousands of young people, from all over the country, may see and study these new forms.<sup>677</sup>

Had he been aware of it, this announcement would likely have been somewhat surprising to Duchamp. The outbreak of the Second World War had severely restricted the frequency with which Dreier and Duchamp were able to communicate. Immediately following the declaration of war in September 1939 he wrote to Dreier to reassure her of his own welfare and the health and whereabouts of his family.<sup>678</sup> Beyond this, and the declaration of consent regarding the donation of the Société Anonyme to the Country Museum, Duchamp's communication with Dreier was reduced to little more than a few meagre telegrams. Correspondence became even more difficult with the fall of Paris in June of 1940, and Duchamp's precipitous departure from the city.

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transfer of the collection was complete by the end of October. This is incorrect, as the letter she refers to (22 October & 28 October 1941) only confirmed the arrival of the paintings in the collection, the watercolours, drawings, etchings and lithographs had yet to be sent. All letters are in YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>677</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Charles Seymour, 14 October 1941. RU 23, Box 61, Folder 534. Charles Seymour, President of Yale University, Records. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Quoted in Kenney, 'The Société Anonyme Collection,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 147.

<sup>678</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 24 September 1939. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Dreier only wrote to Duchamp once during 1941.<sup>679</sup> This letter was enclosed within another letter to their mutual associate, Rene Lefebvre-Foinet, sent on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July and has subsequently been lost. Written only four days after Theodore Sizer's initial visit to the Haven, we can safely assume that Sizer's visit and her hopes that Yale would finance the Country Museum were among the topics mentioned in Dreier's letter to Duchamp. Confirming this likelihood is the brief description of the letter she provided to Lefebvre-Foinet: "I have written to Marcel telling him that I have written to the French Ambassador and that I hope he (/Marcel)... would help us with our Idea of a Country Museum – the first of its kind."<sup>680</sup> As Sizer had not yet written to Katherine Dreier to thank her for the visit and inform her that he thought it unlikely that Yale could afford to finance her idea in its present formation, there is no reason to believe that her plans for the Country Museum, as of the writing of this letter, differed substantially from any of her previous correspondence. Dreier was also aware of the censorship that her letter would undergo, and left it open for Lefebvre-Foinet to alter or send back if he felt she "had said anything which will delay the letter."<sup>681</sup> Thus, we can assume that whatever she may have mentioned regarding Sizer's visit and her present plans for the Country Museum, she did not go into a great deal of depth.

Duchamp's response to this lost letter, itself also lost, likewise does not appear to focus upon the fate of the Country Museum or the Société Anonyme collection. The only record of Duchamp's response, dated 26 July 1941, is again found in Dreier's correspondence with Rene Lefebvre-Foinet, who acted as Dreier's contact with Duchamp and advisor in her attempts to acquire a visa for the artist. These references only mention that Duchamp specifically wished to enter the United States on a visitor's visa,<sup>682</sup> and that the cost of his passage needed to be sent from

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<sup>679</sup> Dreier mentions enclosing a letter to Duchamp in her letter to René Lefebvre-Foinet of 20 July 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Despite Dreier's meticulous record keeping, there is no copy of the enclosed letter among Dreier's papers at Yale.

<sup>680</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Rene Lefebvre-Foinet, 20 July 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid.

<sup>682</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Rene Lefebvre-Foinet, 6 September 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

America.<sup>683</sup> In light of the political exigencies, we may safely assume that Duchamp's mention of Yale and the Country Museum was scant, if present at all.

As both Dreier and Duchamp were co-trustees of the Société Anonyme collection, Dreier could not legally give the Société Anonyme collection to Yale without Duchamp's consent. It has been suggested that Duchamp provided this consent by telegram,<sup>684</sup> though there is no concrete evidence of the existence of such a document. While it is possible that Duchamp provided some form of consent to the presentation of the Société Anonyme collection to Yale prior to his return to the United States in June of 1942, it is rather more likely that no such declaration was obtained. Whether Duchamp officially consented to the gift or not, what is clear is that he was not consulted and his input was not sought at any point during the three month period between Sizer's initial visit to the Haven and the transfer of the collection to Yale.

### **The *Large Glass* and the Dreier Collection**

The transfer of the Société Anonyme collection to Yale was only a modestly satisfying compromise for Katherine Dreier. While she had found a home for the Société Anonyme collection, she had yet to find a satisfactory solution to the problem presented by her home, the Haven. Despite the departure of William Hekking from the Country Museum project, and Theodore Sizer's insightful critique of the project's financial feasibility, Dreier remained firmly dedicated to converting the Haven into a museum. The reasons for her tenacity were many, but chief among them were a strong emotional attachment to the country estate, and the assurance of a home for her extensive personal library and art collection.

Throughout the life of the Country Museum plan, Dreier believed that she could attract the necessary financial backing through the promise of the Société's art collection as well as her own. While she had effectively given up a significant bargaining chip by donating the Société's collection to Yale, she still believed that her

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<sup>683</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Rene Lefebvre-Foinet 19 September 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>684</sup> Kenney, 'The Société Anonyme Collection,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 147.

own collection, particularly the *Large Glass*, offered a significantly substantial draw to lure the necessary backing. Unfortunately for Dreier the financial situation in America, which Sizer had described as “abnormal” in July,<sup>685</sup> became completely impossible following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour the following December.

As one of the wealthiest potential donors to take an interest in the Country Museum, Dreier returned to Yale again nearly a year later, having had no success with her project in the intervening period. Having all but given up hope, she lamented to Sizer that, “It was a great disappointment that neither you nor Dean Meeks could see the value of this new educational plan – and the fact that you would have received the balance of my Collection at my death – should not have made it worth your while to study the project more carefully.”<sup>686</sup> As Sizer reiterated, “[i]t is the insuperable barrier of finance” that prevented Yale, and presumably all others, from pursuing the project, and ultimately Dreier was forced to place the Haven on the open market.<sup>687</sup>

While her private collection, without the augmentation of the Société collection, was unable to secure the donations necessary to make her dream of a museum a reality, it was by no means meagre in either size or scope. Katherine Dreier’s appetite for modern art was nothing short of voracious. According to *Time* magazine, she “stored away abstractions like a Connecticut squirrel hoarding nuts for a hard winter,” further observing that “[o]ther later and richer art squirrels sometimes, got bigger and tastier nuts than Katherine. But her hoard contained more different kinds than any body else’s in the U.S.”<sup>688</sup>

Dictated by her own notions of aesthetics, personal loyalties and ideologies, not to mention her own eclectic sense of taste, Dreier’s personal collection was every bit as varied in quality as that of the Société Anonyme’s, while being nearly twice as

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<sup>685</sup> Letter from Theodore Sizer to Katherine Dreier, 22 July 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>686</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Theodore Sizer, 4 April 1942. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1126. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>687</sup> Letter from Theodore Sizer to Katherine Dreier, 7 April 1942. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1126. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>688</sup> Anonymous, ‘Katherine & Sadie,’ *Time*, 17 November 1941.

<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,795607,00.html>> [accessed 27 November 2009].



large.<sup>689</sup> Her own paintings, as well as those of her sister Dorothea were heavily represented within the collection. Equally well represented were the work of more established modernists such as Constantin Brancusi, Joseph Stella, Wassily Kandinsky, Naum Gabo, Theo VanDoesburg, Piet Mondrian and Kurt Schwitters. Most prized though was the jewel of the collection, Duchamp's *Large Glass*.

Until the legal designation of the Société Anonyme collection in 1936, the collection of the Société had been completely intermixed with Katherine Dreier's own collection. Throughout the negotiations between Dreier and Yale, Sizer attempted to play upon this aesthetic unity in his efforts to cajole Dreier into uniting the two collections at Yale. In responding to the conditions set by Dreier regarding the gift of the Société Anonyme collection, Sizer threw in the following ham-handed afterthought: "Although no mention was made of your personal collection I assume this is a part of the gift." His stated rationale for making such assumptions on Dreier's generosity was that "The two [collections] supplement each other so well [that they] should be retained intact in perpetuity."<sup>690</sup>

Dreier's response, that she had "repeatedly stated that since the University of Yale [*sic*] turned down our educational plan at the Haven – the gift of the Glass – the Mural both by Duchamp as well as the Private Collection were not included in the gift," undermines the off-handed phrasing employed by Sizer.<sup>691</sup> Much as Sizer hoped that by accepting the Société Anonyme collection, Yale would be favourably placed to receive the remainder of Dreier's collection; so Dreier believed that by

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<sup>689</sup> At the time of its donation to Yale, the collection of the Société Anonyme totalled 481 items (Letter from Katherine Dreier to Mr. Viotor, 18 October 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library). Dreier's own difficulty in maintaining records of the contents of both the Société Anonyme's collection and her own has been mentioned, making a definitive tally of her works in her own collection at any one point in time difficult. We can, however, derive some sense of the size of her collection from tallies taken after her death. At the time of her death she had approximately 450 works in her private collection (Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 381), though she had donated approximately 300 works from her private collection to that of the Société Anonyme at Yale between 1941 and her death in 1952 (Kenney, 'The Société Anonyme Collection,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 153). We can conclude that the size of her private collection, at its peak, totalled between 700 and 800 works of art.

<sup>690</sup> 'The Conditions upon which the Société Anonyme would present its Collection to Yale University,' n.d. [between 7 August and 21 August 1941], p. 3. YCAL MSS 101, Box 93, Folder 2369. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid.

holding on to the *Large Glass* and *Tu m'*, she could secure the funding she desired. Sizer, however, was confident that Dreier's Country Museum plans would not be realized, and was willing to wait.

Immediately following Katherine Dreier's eventual decision to sell the Haven and abandon her plans for the Country Museum, Sizer again expressed his interest in obtaining her private collection for Yale.

I must tell you that I have three wishes. One, this terse, scholarly and well illustrated catalog; two, that we may ultimately possess your art library, these books and pamphlets which document the collection; and finally, that your personal collection might again be reunited with that of the Société

Anonyme—you see I dream great dreams and have high hopes!<sup>692</sup>

Sizer's hopes were indeed high. Dreier was still smarting from Yale's rejection of the Country Museum, and neglected to acknowledge Sizer's aspirations. Moreover, with her pet project no longer a consideration, Dreier was inclined to take Duchamp's advice and maintain possession of her collection.

Yale was not the only institution interested in making a play for Dreier's private collection. Walter and Louise Arensberg, whose collection was then still committed to the University of California, broached the subject with Dreier in early 1945. The couple were every bit as interested in uniting the two collections under their own control, as Dreier had been to unite the collections under her control in her initial plans for the Country Museum in 1936. Despite the Arensbergs' best efforts, their proposal was foredoomed to failure. With all the concerns of distance and control addressed earlier, Dreier opted to "keep my decision open until later."<sup>693</sup>

In addition to Yale and the University of California, the Museum of Modern Art also expressed its desire for Dreier's collection, particularly her collection of Duchamp's work. In 1945, taking advantage of the sale of the Haven and Dreier's need to store the *Large Glass* while she moved house, the Museum of Modern Art

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<sup>692</sup> Letter from Theodore Sizer to Katherine Dreier, 7 April 1942. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1126. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>693</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Louise Arensberg, 12 March 1945. YCAL MSS 101, Box 2, Folder 55. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

borrowed this work for a two year stretch between 1944 and 1946.<sup>694</sup> This loan constituted the first public exhibition of the *Large Glass* since it had shattered, and only the second time the work had ever been publicly displayed. For the years that the work was in their possession, the Museum of Modern Art made it clear, in no uncertain terms, that they hoped to be the eventual owners of this seminal work. When the time came for the work's return, Barr sent Dreier a handwritten letter in which he expressed his "great regret that we are to lose 'The Great Glass' which I had hoped we might keep indefinitely", before closing with the prompt: "Sometime I hope we may have it again – when you can spare it!"<sup>695</sup>

James Johnson Sweeney, who had recently replaced Alfred Barr as the director of MoMA was another enthusiastic supporter of Duchamp's work. Sweeney had begun preparing for "*une assez longue monographie sur*"<sup>696</sup> Duchamp by taking lengthy and regular interviews of the artist ("*je lui raconte toute ma vie comme à un confesseur...!!!*")<sup>697</sup> Sweeney also employed these interviews to try and rectify the museum's dearth of work by Duchamp. MoMA had been the first museum in the world to acquire a painting by Duchamp when they purchased the *Passage from Virgin to Bride* from Walter Pach in 1945. Sweeney wished to supplement this example of Duchamp's work with others, and used the interviews as an opportunity to ply Duchamp for assistance in acquiring one. Duchamp confessed to a friend that "*je m'amuse beaucoup à la pensée que tous ces gens ont attendu si longtemps pour désirer, acheter quelque chose; évidemment maintenant les prix ont changé,*"<sup>698</sup> Presumably not wanting MoMA to get off too easily, Duchamp did not direct Sweeney either to the Arensbergs or Katherine Dreier. Rather, Duchamp suggested that MoMA purchase his *Nine Malic Moulds*, then in the collection of Henri-Pierre Roché.<sup>699</sup> (figure 4.16)

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<sup>694</sup> This second public showing of the *Large Glass*, and the first since it had been repaired, is not mentioned in Schwarz's *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*. Through e-mail correspondence with a representative of the Museum of Modern Art, it has been confirmed that the *Large Glass* was lent to MoMA on 9 September 1943, and was on display from 24 May 1944 until 2 April 1946.

<sup>695</sup> Letter from Alfred Barr to Katherine Dreier, [February or March] 1946. YCAL MSS 101, Box 4, Folder 106. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>696</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Henri-Pierre Roché, 21 August 1945; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 162, pp. 249-252.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid.

<sup>699</sup> Ibid.

For whatever reason, MoMA did not purchase *9 Moules Malic*,<sup>700</sup> and instead placed all of their hopes upon ingratiating themselves with Katherine Dreier. Why MoMA chose this option is difficult to comprehend with hindsight, as Dreier's relationship with the Museum of Modern Art was complex, to say the least, even occasionally contentious. Dreier not only saw MoMA as an upstart and a rival to her Société Anonyme, her trusted advisor Duchamp also initially maintained an intense personal dislike for then Director, Alfred Barr.

In 1934, Duchamp wrote not only to Dreier, but also to Julien Levy, Walter Pach and Walter Arensberg to ask them not to lend any of his works to MoMA.<sup>701</sup> It is still unclear what prompted this uncharacteristically vehement expression of dislike from Duchamp; all that is apparent is that the sentiment had been brewing for some time. In his letter to Pach, Duchamp begins by recalling when, "I mentioned to you last winter my lack of confidence in Barr, and his feeling of hostility towards me (in particular)... I am determined to fight him in my manner."<sup>702</sup> Duchamp's dislike of Barr had also arisen previously in his conversations with Dreier. His request that she stop loaning works to MoMA is justified only with the comment: "do you remember my telling you about the arrogance of the gentleman."<sup>703</sup>

In addition to Duchamp's silent fury and loan embargo, MoMA had also incurred the more public indignation of Katherine Dreier. While generally adopting a *laissez faire* attitude toward the different picture of modern abstraction painted by the Museum of Modern Art, Dreier was spurred to outrage by Barr's 1936 exhibition, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*. Dreier's bone of contention was the decision to

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<sup>700</sup> For whatever reason, neither Sweeney nor MoMA purchased the work from Roché, and it remained in Roché's collection until 1956 when it was acquired by Duchamp's wife, Alexina. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 328, p. 632.

<sup>701</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 17 October 1934; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 116, pp. 191-193. Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 15 December 1934. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 320. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Each of these letters mentions that he had also written to Julien Levy and Walter Arensberg, though these letters do not survive.

<sup>702</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach, 17 October 1934; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 116, pp. 191-193.

<sup>703</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 15 December 1934. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 320. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

include in the exhibition works of art by children and the insane.<sup>704</sup> So outraged was Dreier that she not only withdrew from the exhibition all of the works she had agreed to loan, she also, despite Duchamp's advice to the contrary, contacted several media outlets to whom she championed her cause.<sup>705</sup> She even arranged to be interviewed about the controversy for a local radio broadcast.<sup>706</sup>

Despite all of this ill feeling, Dreier regularly agreed to loan works to MoMA from both her personal collection and the collection of the Société Anonyme. Rather than begrudge her perceived rival, she found MoMA's continual reliance upon her own collection and efforts to be flattering. On occasion, Dreier even suggested to Barr other works in her collection that she thought might be in keeping with his exhibitions. Upon discovering that her *Rotary Glass Plates (Precision Optics)* (figure 4.12) had been misplaced, she encouraged Barr to include the newly completed *Rotoreliefs* (figure 5.07) in the exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art*, and offer them for sale as well: "I could cable him and he could send a hundred to you right away... Do do it – and I will help you with it from my angle."<sup>707</sup> Though she may not have been happy about it, she understood that MoMA had become the dominant institution for promoting modern art in America. Thus, she was aware that display in MoMA was a substantial boon to the reputations of the artists whose work she championed.

It was this spirit of these regular loans that Katherine Dreier lent the *Large Glass* to the Museum of Modern Art in 1944. Ostensibly the loan was part of the museum's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition, *Art in Progress*, though it was left in the care of the museum for two full years on an extended loan. From Dreier's perspective, the loan also enabled her to transport the work safely from the Haven to her new home in Milford, and have it stored until the work was ready to be placed in her home, all at

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<sup>704</sup> Telegram from Katherine Dreier to Marcel Duchamp, 9 Feb 1937. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 322. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library..

<sup>705</sup> Most notably, *The New York Times* covered her protest in an article titled: "Exhibits by Insane Anger Surrealist" 19 January 1937, p. 25.

<sup>706</sup> An audio copy, and the transcript of Dreier's appearance on 'Let's Talk it Over,' January 1937, are in YCAL MSS101, Box 61, folder 1666 & 1667. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>707</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Alfred Barr, 11 February 1936. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 321. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. At Dreier's urging, the *Rotoreliefs* were included in "Cubism and Abstract Art." Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 304.

the expense of the Museum of Modern Art. However practical Dreier's reasons for allowing MoMA this rarest of loans, it had instilled loftier ambitions in the mind of Alfred Barr. As he explained to a colleague, "We are trying to be extra helpful to Miss Dreier partly because of her extraordinary efforts in the past in a good cause, partly because we hope that she may leave the Museum some of her collection."<sup>708</sup>

Dreier refrained from responding to Barr's hints; rather, she turned his desire for the *Large Glass* to her advantage. Leaving the prospect of the *Large Glass*'s future disposition open, Dreier asked Barr to join the board of directors of the newly revived Société Anonyme.<sup>709</sup> Dreier indubitably believed that having Barr's name attached to the group would provide additional weight in her dealings with Yale. She further made use of Barr's position on the Société's board to help bring about her final goal for the Société, the publication of a comprehensive catalogue. Dreier imposed upon Barr to write entries on artists for the catalogue,<sup>710</sup> and to help elicit donations for the project.<sup>711</sup>

Further ingratiating both himself and his institution to Dreier and Duchamp, Barr arranged, at Duchamp's behest, for MoMA to purchase Dreier's "abstract portrait" of Duchamp for the sum of \$500.<sup>712</sup> This decision not only provided Dreier with much needed funds for the Société Anonyme catalogue, and played to Duchamp's ego; it also played heavily to Dreier's vanity as a painter. Yale had

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<sup>708</sup> Confidential Memo from Alfred Barr to Bernard Karpel, 9 January 1950. Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, [Barr 1.152, mf 2172:1040], The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

<sup>709</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Alfred Barr, 4 March 1946. YCAL MSS 101, Box 4, Folder 105. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>710</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Alfred Barr, 25 January 1949. Letter from Alfred Barr to Katherine Dreier, 24 February 1949. YCAL MSS 101, Box 4, Folder 106. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>711</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Alfred Barr, 21 February 1948. Alfred Barr to Katherine Dreier, 21 September 1948. Dreier's letter mentions a \$100 membership in the Société purchased by Nelson Rockefeller, and Barr's mentions "I induced Philip Goodwin to make his gift," likewise of \$100. YCAL MSS 101, Box 4, Folder 105. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>712</sup> Dreier initially suggested the purchase in September of 1948 (Letter from Katherine Dreier to Alfred Barr, 7 September 1948), though her offer appeared to have largely been ignored. Six months later she wrote to Barr that "Some time ago Marcel Duchamp wrote me that you would like to consider purchasing my abstract portrait of him for the Museum of Modern Art." (Letter from Katherine Dreier to Alfred Barr, 25 February 1949). Both are in YCAL MSS 101, Box 4, Folders 105 & 106. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. \$500.00 in 1949 would have the approximate buying power of \$4,541.53 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

inadvertently caused tension in its relationship with Dreier over this same point almost immediately following the donation of the Société Anonyme collection. In referencing her painting career within their press release, Yale had effectively damned her with faint praise;<sup>713</sup> a mistake Barr was not going to make. Writing of the acquisitions committee's decision to purchase Dreier's *Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, (figure 4.17) Barr expressed his happiness at the decision, "so that our Collection will have a representative Dreier abstract portrait."<sup>714</sup>

Barr's most overt attempt to curry favour with Dreier occurred a year later. Occasioned by the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Société Anonyme, Dreier received a letter from Museum of Modern Art president Nelson Rockefeller. This letter, almost certainly written by Alfred Barr, was a clear attempt to assuage any remaining feelings of rivalry Dreier may have had towards the younger, more successful institution. With effusive flattery the letter runs:

In 1929 when we opened our doors, the Museum of Modern Art quite unwittingly assumed the second half of the Société Anonyme's name. Since then we have followed your lead not only in name, but in several more important ways as our exhibitions and collections clearly show. Your foresight, imagination, courage, and integrity have been a frequent and important example to us.<sup>715</sup>

Though "deeply touched" by this "public expression of recognition,"<sup>716</sup> the early rivalry between the two museums of modern art ran too deep. Katherine Dreier could never fully overcome her sense of injustice at the relative ease with which

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<sup>713</sup> The description of Dreier as being "herself an artist of ability" in the press release announcing the Société Anonyme gift caused her to take offense. Letter from Katherine Dreier to Theodore Sizer, 26 November 1941. YCAL MSS 101, Box 39, Folder 1125. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>714</sup> Letter from Alfred Barr to Katherine Dreier, 1 June 1949. YCAL MSS 101, Box 4, Folder 106. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>715</sup> Letter from Nelson Rockefeller to Katherine Dreier, 30 April 1950. YCAL MSS 101, Box 26, Folder 738. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Jennifer Gross has suggested that this letter was, in fact, drafted by Alfred Barr, a point with which it is hard to disagree. Gross, 'An Artists' Museum,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 5.

<sup>716</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Alfred Barr, 5 May 1950. YCAL MSS 101, Box 4, Folder 106. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

MoMA was able to not only surpass her organization in prominence, but also achieve everything that she had so long desired for her beloved Société Anonyme. Despite making the most aggressive play for her collection, the Museum of Modern Art had the least likelihood of receiving it from Dreier.

In an ironic turn of events, the institution that ultimately received the *Large Glass* was the institution that expressed the least desire for it. As of 1950, Katherine Dreier had yet to be swayed by any of the attempts to obtain her collection. The sale of the Haven and her efforts to complete the catalogue of the Société Anonyme had moreover distracted Dreier from considering the long term preservation of her collection. Thus, Dreier's desires for her collection had changed little since her plans for the Country Museum and her attempts to unify her own collection with that of the Arensbergs.

The idea of unifying these two collections was not only appealing to Dreier; it remained a fervent desire for both the Arensbergs and Duchamp himself. Following the dissolution of their agreement with the University of California, the Arensbergs had let their pursuit of Dreier's collection fall by the wayside. Now, firmly ensconced in Philadelphia, they resumed their efforts. Louise Arensberg and Duchamp both promoted the desirability of Dreier's collection to the director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Fiske Kimball.<sup>717</sup> Simultaneously, Duchamp lobbied Dreier on behalf of both the Arensbergs and Philadelphia. Their efforts had almost immediate results, and Duchamp was soon able to tentatively offer Kimball the donation of Dreier's private collection.<sup>718</sup>

In the hopes of obtaining Dreier's "2 or 3 Duchamp glasses...which Duchamp tells Lou she may well give to us. Also a couple of Brancusi's,"<sup>719</sup> Kimball wrote to

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<sup>717</sup> Handwritten note by Fiske Kimball, dated 16 December 1950. Notes of what was likely a telephone conversation between Louise and Fiske. Box 81, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>718</sup> This offer appears to have been made in person, as can be inferred from Kimball's letter to Dreier (31 January 1951) in which he writes: "Marcel Duchamp has told me of your kind suggestions in our favor." Box 81, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>719</sup> Handwritten note by Fiske Kimball, dated 16 December 1950. Notes of what was likely a telephone conversation between Louise and Fiske. Box 81, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.



Dreier to arrange a meeting.<sup>720</sup> While they were unable to meet for several months, Kimball and Dreier exchanged an increasingly enthusiastic and effusive succession of letters. Kimball even assured Dreier that, “From afar, I have followed your work with admiration, and, as I told [Duchamp], am wholly confident to our agreeing in any such thing as you wish to do.”<sup>721</sup> In spite of this exceptionally positive beginning, relations soon turned sour when Kimball wrote regretfully that he would have to decline the offer of her collection in toto.<sup>722</sup>

Dreier’s willingness to donate her collection to the Philadelphia Museum of Art was not lacking conditions. In order for her to accept having her collection rest alongside that of the Arensbergs she desired that her collection be accepted and shown on equal footing with the Arensbergs’ collection. This was problematic for Kimball, as it meant that Dreier wanted her collection to be “kept and shown en bloc”<sup>723</sup> As Kimball pointed out, “Walter has eliminated, from what must be constantly shown, anything representing merely friendship or personal relations.”<sup>724</sup> Dreier’s collection, on the other hand, was “a highly personal and family grouping of works not wholly coherent and comprehensive.”<sup>725</sup> Tactful, though uncompromisingly frank, Kimball confessed “that major obstacles to the acceptance and showing together of the Dreier Collection are its containing such very considerable groupings of your own and your sister’s paintings, interesting as they are.”<sup>726</sup>

Dreier was, as Kimball expected, disappointed and wounded by both the declination of her offer and the rationale behind the decision.<sup>727</sup> Most surprising of all was the apparent unwillingness of Kimball to negotiate or compromise with Dreier in any way, a point which must have been especially biting to Dreier after being so

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<sup>720</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Katherine Dreier, 31 January 1951. Box 81, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>721</sup> Ibid.

<sup>722</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Katherine Dreier, 17 April 1951. Box 81, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid. Kimball’s underlining.

<sup>724</sup> Ibid.

<sup>725</sup> Ibid.

<sup>726</sup> Ibid.

<sup>727</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Marcel Duchamp, 18 April 1951. Box 81, Folder 5, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

openly courted by both Yale and MoMA. The extent of Dreier's wounded pride is fully apparent in her politely indignant response to Kimball's rejection:

Your letter of April 17<sup>th</sup> reached me in the hospital where I am still, for, unfortunately, I had to come here on Tuesday following your visit to Milford.

I am sorry you did not return my list, since, naturally, I would like to have it back.

It would interest me very much if you would check on the list those paintings and sculpture which interested your Trustees. In one way I was not surprised at your answer, for, with the gifts of Gallatin, Arensberg and the Chester Dales, my list would not add many new names.

My interest, as well as that of Duchamp's, has always been to show that the new approach in Art was a movement – not simply the work of highly-gifted individuals. It is, therefore, in our judgement, both coherent and comprehensive. This applies to my collection, as well as to the Collection of the Société Anonyme and would, therefore, naturally include works also by less important artists.

It never occurred to me that a museum of your size would not have a gallery set aside for Philadelphia artists, especially considering the attitude in America towards the local artist. Therefore, a small room with a few paintings by Walter Shirlaw, my sister, Dorothea, and myself did not seem improper. We never discussed at any time the length of time which could have been allocated to a collection en bloc.

Most people have been tremendously stimulated by the personal touch of Phillip, King of Spain, at the Prado, or by that beautiful collection at Kassel; and, personally, I have never forgotten the impression that the Marquand Collection, given to the Metropolitan, made on me as a young girl.

I can readily see, in a Museum covering so many periods so perfectly as yours, that the gift of the little Gothic statue would be out of place.

I not only agree with, but respect your attitude that any deception, such as retiring some of the works, would not be fitting.<sup>728</sup>

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<sup>728</sup> Letter from Katherine Dreier to Fiske Kimball, 30 April 1951, handwritten post-script on verso, dated 1 May 1951. Box 81, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

Illustrative of the sway Duchamp held over Dreier is the stark contrast between this typewritten response to Kimball, and the handwritten post-script added the following day. Having presumably both salved her wounds, and spoken with Duchamp, Dreier made the following proposal to Kimball:

I wonder whether you realized how disappointed Arensberg + Duchamp both are not to have the “Big Glass” in your museum with Duchamp’s other works, since it is his greatest achievement.... Maybe we can take this one item up from my collection for further discussion.<sup>729</sup>

In light of Dreier’s wounded pride, this concession is equally indicative of the respect she maintained for Duchamp’s wishes and the importance to Duchamp of placing the *Large Glass* with the Arensbergs’ collection.

While Duchamp wanted the whole of Dreier’s portion of his oeuvre to end up with the Arensbergs’ collection in Philadelphia, his primary concern was to guide the *Large Glass* there. Though Kimball claimed to “recognize all its importance,” and considered it among her “outstanding items,” he was unwilling to negotiate for the work.<sup>730</sup> Kimball did admit that “[a]s we shall have now the principal assemblage of the life work of Duchamp, it would be a great pity not to have his masterpiece.”<sup>731</sup> Even in admitting this, however, he was expressing a tacit unwillingness to accept virtually any of the other works in Dreier’s collection, including those works by Duchamp.<sup>732</sup> Kimball’s apparent lack of interest in adding to “the principal assemblage of the life work of Duchamp” now in Philadelphia was the final, insurmountable barrier to Duchamp, Dreier and the Arensbergs’ collective dream of creating their “living monument” to Duchamp.

Beyond expressing a mutual willingness to consider the isolated donation of the *Large Glass*, there was no further discussion between Katherine Dreier and Fiske Kimball. This was largely due to the fact that Dreier’s health took a turn for the worse soon after Kimball’s visit. With the increasing severity of her condition,

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<sup>729</sup> Ibid.

<sup>730</sup> Letter from Fiske Kimball to Katherine Dreier, 3 May 1951. Box 81, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid.

<sup>732</sup> The only other work in Dreier’s collection that Kimball was in the least bit interested in was the painting by Braque that hung in her bedroom. Letter from Fiske Kimball to Katherine Dreier, 3 May 1951. Box 81, Folder 3, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

Duchamp turned their discussions away from such stressful considerations as the disposition of her collection. Instead, their discussions became limited to Dreier's health, as well as the general well being of their mutual friends. Dreier not only turned away from such stresses in her correspondence with Duchamp, but more generally as her communications became limited exclusively to her family and Duchamp.

Thus, when Katherine Dreier died on 29 March 1952 after a protracted illness, she had arranged for the disposition of only seven works out the more than four hundred objects that comprised her ample collection. These seven works, Raymond Duchamp-Villon's *Seated Woman*, David Kakabadze's *The Speared Fish*, Constantin Brancusi's *Yellow Bird*, John Storrs's *The Dancer*, Jacques Villon's *Sketch for Self Portrait*, and her own *Self Portrait, 1911*, were to be added to the collection of the Société Anonyme at Yale.<sup>733</sup> Dreier also favoured Yale with the gift of her library, bringing at least one more of TheodoreSizer's "three wishes" to fruition.<sup>734</sup>

Beyond these two provisions, no plans had been made for the dispersal of any of Dreier's art collection. Rather, Dreier had named Albert C. Kelly, Reverend Frederick Burgess,<sup>735</sup> and Marcel Duchamp as the executors and trustees of her estate. Among other obligations beholden upon the group, they were responsible for the dispersal of Dreier's collection, though in practice this responsibility fell exclusively upon Duchamp. Dreier declined to designate any one institution as the recipient of her collection, instead merely specifying that the recipient institution should be charitable, non-profit, and educational in purpose, "including the encouragement of art."<sup>736</sup> If the executors were unable to decide upon a suitable recipient institution, Dreier then specified that the collection was to be bequeathed to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.<sup>737</sup>

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<sup>733</sup> Last Will and Testament of Katherine Sophie Dreier, 23 February 1951, clause four. Milford Probate Court, Milford, Connecticut.

<sup>734</sup> Last Will and Testament of Katherine Sophie Dreier, 23 February 1951, clause three.

<sup>735</sup> Reverend Burgess was the Episcopal Bishop of Long Island and was attached to the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Garden City, N.Y. It was from the Cathedral of the Incarnation that Dreier received her first professional commission, to paint the altar of the chapel at St. Paul's School for Boys, attached to the Cathedral. Duchamp was supervising the restoration of the altar paintings at the time of Dreier's death.

<sup>736</sup> Last Will and Testament of Katherine Sophie Dreier, 23 February 1951, clause five.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid.

Duchamp put a great deal of time and effort into the dispersal of Dreier's collection, attempting to interpret and fulfil Dreier's desires. Unlike the other executors, however, Duchamp had the additional consideration of his own legacy to take into consideration. Shouldered with the dispersal of Dreier's art collection, Duchamp had been placed in the unprecedented position of being solely responsible for the permanent placement of the second largest collection of his own work. Despite Dreier's long held desire to maintain her collection as a unified whole, and Duchamp's assurance to others that he would do so,<sup>738</sup> Duchamp ultimately divided Dreier's collection between five different institutions;<sup>739</sup> the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Phillips Gallery, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art and Yale University.<sup>740</sup>

The jewel of Dreier's collection, and Duchamp's own masterpiece, the *Large Glass* was presented to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. According to Duchamp, "Miss. Dreier always had it in mind and she actually spoke to me about it, only a few weeks before she died. \_I feel confident that I am carrying out her wish."<sup>741</sup> Confident though he may have been that Dreier desired the *Large Glass* to be placed in Philadelphia; his evocation of Dreier's last wish indicates that he was rather less confident that Kimball would accept the offer. His willingness to employ guilt and a sense of respect for the deceased indicates both the degree to which Duchamp was willing to go to get the *Large Glass* placed with the Arensberg collection and the level of resistance he anticipated meeting from the PMA. Duchamp confided to Walter that "I suspect that F.K. and the trustees hardly like anything she has, including the glass as well. ... I have a hunch that broken glass is hard to swallow for a 'Museum' \_"<sup>742</sup> Whether real or perceived, Duchamp found the lack of enthusiasm for his work

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<sup>738</sup> Letter from Duchamp to Louise and Walter Arensberg, 6 May 1952; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 211, pp. 313-314.

<sup>739</sup> Dreier's desire for a unified retention and exhibition of her collection was noted by Duchamp within their correspondence as early as 24 August 1937, and persisted through her negotiations, most notably with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, in the last years of her life. Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 24 August 1937. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 323. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>740</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 381.

<sup>741</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Fiske Kimball, 6 May 1952. Box 81, Folder 5, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. Duchamp's underlining. See note 325.

<sup>742</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arensberg, 19 April 1951; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 198, p. 301. Duchamp's underlining. See note 325.

troublesome. For this reason, and their initial declination of Dreier's collection, the Philadelphia Museum of Art was not offered anything else from her collection.

In addition to this single gift to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, a gift of seventeen works was made to the Phillips Gallery in Washington, D.C. As a museum of modern art nearly as old as her own Société Anonyme, Dreier had begun to take an interest in the small museum during her final years. Duchamp also guided thirty-four works from Dreier's collection into the Guggenheim Museum.<sup>743</sup>

The two most substantial beneficiaries of Dreier's collection were the two institutions that had most vigorously courted Dreier's collection during her life. The Museum of Modern Art, which had held out hope unto the last that it might receive the *Large Glass*, was awarded one hundred and two works.<sup>744</sup> Yale remained her most numerically substantial beneficiary, however, receiving nearly three hundred works of art in various media.<sup>745</sup> In addition to the seven works specified in her will, and the nearly three hundred presented through Duchamp, Katherine Dreier had herself added approximately another three hundred works to the collection of the Société Anonyme at Yale in the decade between the initial gift in 1942, and her death in 1952. Thus, Yale ultimately received more than one thousand works of art by one hundred and eighty different artists through the largesse of Katherine Dreier.<sup>746</sup>

Both Duchamp and others have asserted that the selection of institutions and division of works was determined by an interpretation of Dreier's interests and desires.<sup>747</sup> While it is assuredly true that Dreier's wishes were high amongst Duchamp's considerations, they were not his only considerations. There is simultaneously evident a strain of self-interest in both the selection of institutions and the decisions surrounding the dispersal of his own work. In addition to guiding the *Large Glass* to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Duchamp included one of his own works among the twenty-four works presented to the Guggenheim.<sup>748</sup> With the

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<sup>743</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 381.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid. Kenney, 'The Société Anonyme Collection,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 153.

<sup>746</sup> Kenney, 'The Société Anonyme Collection,' in *The Société Anonyme*, ed. by Gross, p. 153.

<sup>747</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 381.

<sup>748</sup> This work by Duchamp was the preparatory *Study for Portrait of Chess Players*, of October 1911. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 225, p. 550.

exception of these two objects, the entirety of that portion of his oeuvre that was in Katherine Dreier's possession was divided between the Museum of Modern Art and Yale University.

While both of the institutions received roughly the same number of Duchamp's works, there is a marked difference in the quality and significance of the works each institution received. Yale famously received Duchamp's final painting *Tu m'*, which Dreier considered to be the other great jewel of her collection. (figure 3.13) Yale also received Duchamp's *Rotary Glass Plates (Precision Optics)*,<sup>749</sup> (figure 4.12) and Dreier's replica of *In Advance of the Broken Arm*. (figure 3.05) Beyond this, Yale received little more than ephemera and editions in multiple such as the study for the *Large Glass*, the *Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries, No. 2* (figure 4.18) and Dreier's versions of Duchamp's *Pocket Chess Set*, (figure 5.21) and her *Monte Carlo Bond*.<sup>750</sup> (figure 4.19) In contrast to this, MoMA received Dreier's only early painting on canvas by Duchamp, his *Landscape* of 1911. (figure 4.20) MoMA also received Duchamp's "experiment with chance," the *Three Standard Stoppages*, (figure 4.10), his *Handmade Stereopticon Slide* (figure 4.05) and the Dadaist *Fresh Widow*. (figure 4.11) Most significantly though, MoMA received the only other of Duchamp's paintings on glass owned by Katherine Dreier, *To Be Looked at....* (figure 4.03)

This division, so heavily favouring Dreier's rival institution, belies Duchamp's assertions that he was attempting to interpret Dreier's wishes. Rather, the decision to guide these and other of his important works to MoMA was based on purely practical considerations. The same features which were the root of the Société Anonyme's rivalry with MoMA, made Duchamp's presentation of his most important works to MoMA nearly a necessity. Duchamp and Dreier had both watched MoMA write the history of modern art, and while Dreier had frequently disagreed with that history,

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<sup>749</sup> Calvin Tomkins has asserted that Duchamp never considered *Rotary Glass Plates* to be an art object. Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 230.

<sup>750</sup> Yale University Art Gallery eCatalogue <<http://ecatalogue.art.yale.edu/>>.

Duchamp pointed out that “the win has no more to do with right or wrong\_ it is a gamble.”<sup>751</sup> The picture of modern art presented by MoMA had long since become the dominant one, and only through inclusion within it could Duchamp ensure the persistence of his own legacy.

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<sup>751</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 9 February 1937. YCAL MSS 101, Box 12, Folder 322. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Duchamp’s underlining. See note 325.



“The builder of [a] church does not guarantee encountering God therein.”<sup>752</sup>

## Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition

### 5

With the vast majority of his known artistic output prominently placed within the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Yale University and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, one might have expected Duchamp’s participation in securing his physical legacy to be completed. Certainly the effects of both the Dreier and Arensberg bequests were swift in coming. The increase in prestige and press interest throughout the 1950s has already been mentioned. The burgeoning interest of the press preceded a growing scholarly interest both in Duchamp’s life and his newly accessible works. Five years after the opening of the Arensberg collection in Philadelphia, 1959 saw the publication of both Duchamp’s collected writings as well as the artist’s first *catalogue raisonné*.<sup>753</sup> These were followed by the typotranslation and publication of Duchamp’s *Green Box* notes in 1960, and his inclusion in the Museum of Modern Art’s *Art of Assemblage* exhibition in 1961.<sup>754</sup> In 1963 Duchamp’s legacy even appeared to have come full circle when his works became the focal point of the exhibition *Armory Show – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*, which opened at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute in Utica, New York before moving to the original 69<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>752</sup> Untitled and undated scratch page. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frame 117].

<sup>753</sup> *Marchand du Sel: The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. by Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (Basel: Gordon & Breach, 1975). Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, trans. by George Heard Hamilton, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Paragraphic Books, 1967). The original French text of *Marchand du Sel* was first published in 1959, as were the first English and French editions of Lebel’s monograph.

<sup>754</sup> Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, ed. by Richard Hamilton, trans. by George Heard Hamilton (London: Percy, Lund, Humphries & Co., 1960). The term typotranslation, a portmanteau of typography and translation adopted by George Head Hamilton and Richard Hamilton, was meant to describe a “transcription that retains the original’s graphic complexity.” Richard Hamilton, ‘The Bride Stripped Bare by Richard Hamilton, Even’ *Tate*, 2000, pp. 56-59 (p. 56).

Regiment Armory in Manhattan. No longer the *succès de scandale* of the 1913 exhibition, Duchamp not only designed the posters for the exhibition, (figure 1.23) he provided an illustrated slide lecture on the significance of the works that appeared in the original *Armory Show*.<sup>755</sup>

Following on the heels of all of this, in October of 1963 at the tender age of 76, Marcel Duchamp became the subject of a retrospective exhibition for the first time in his life. This exhibition, containing approximately 114 items,<sup>756</sup> was the largest single exhibition of Duchamp's work up to that point and "the largest selection of his work ever assembled at one time and place."<sup>757</sup> While a retrospective exhibition of Duchamp's work appears to have been a natural, if somewhat overdue, step in the art-historical acknowledgement of his life and work, among the most striking and unexpected features of *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition* is that it was organized by the Pasadena Art Museum.

While there is a manifest connection between Duchamp's work and the west coast of America, by virtue of his connection with the Arensbergs, this connection does not extend to the artist himself. By 1963, Duchamp had spent approximately thirty years of his life in the United States. With the exception of three trips to the west coast, totalling no more than six weeks in duration,<sup>758</sup> he had spent all of his time in the United States east of the Mississippi River. Duchamp's personal affiliation with the American northeast was only further entrenched following the placement of the bulk of his oeuvre in Philadelphia, New York and New Haven. Thus, by the time of this retrospective exhibition, neither Duchamp, nor virtually any of his works, had been seen in the western half of the country for more than a decade.

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<sup>755</sup> Richard N. Miller, 'Recording of Marcel Duchamp's Armory Show Lecture, 1963,' transcribed by Taylor M. Stapleton, *ToutFait.com: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal*, <[http://www.toutfait.com/online\\_journal\\_details.php?postid=1469](http://www.toutfait.com/online_journal_details.php?postid=1469)> [accessed 28 October 2009].

<sup>756</sup> 'Duchamp Exhibition,' hand-written list of works included in the exhibition. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frame 127-130].

<sup>757</sup> 'Marcel Duchamp – Fact Sheet,' 12 August 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 31-34].

<sup>758</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Hollywood Conversations,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 28.

The fact that all of Duchamp's major works, as well as the artist himself, were on the other side of the country was not the only significant obstacle to the staging of such an exhibition in Pasadena. The other notable difficulty was the aforementioned dearth of cultural institutions throughout the west coast. Commenting on the cultural situation in Los Angeles in 1939, Walter Arensberg referred to the city as "the most perfect vacuum America can produce."<sup>759</sup> The Pasadena Art Museum was not founded until 1942, and then did not switch its focus from nineteenth-century European and American art to twentieth-century art until 1953.<sup>760</sup> Perhaps the best illustration of the philistine climate of Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s can be seen in the McCarthyite decretal by the Los Angeles City Council in 1951 that equated "modern art [with] Communist propaganda and banned its public display in the area."<sup>761</sup>

While this situation had lessened in severity by the start of the 1960s, California had become firmly identified, both ideologically and physically, as outside of the cultural centres of America. It has even been noted that there is a Duchampian irony to the fact that the first retrospective exhibition of an artist so adamant about remaining on the fringe of the art world should take place on the fringe of the American art world.<sup>762</sup> Another less poetic possible reason that such an exhibition was put on by the Pasadena Art Museum, however, is that it would have been difficult for any major north-eastern institution to have done so.

At the time of the exhibition, all of Duchamp's known major works had been dispersed amongst the dominant institutions interested in modern art. However, no one museum contained enough of his work to stage an exhibition that could qualify as truly retrospective in scope. Thus, a proprietary competitiveness may have made the necessary loans from one museum to another a functional impossibility. What may have made Pasadena such an effective site for this exhibition was its ability to act as

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<sup>759</sup> Anon., 'Light in Los Angeles,' p. 60.

<sup>760</sup> 'Museum History,' Norton Simon Museum website

<<http://www.nortonsimon.org/about/history.aspx>>. The Pasadena Art Museum changed its name to The Norton Simon Museum in 1975.

<sup>761</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, 'Hollywood Conversations,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 26.

<sup>762</sup> Dickran Tashjian, 'Nothing left to Chance: Duchamp's First Retrospective,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Bonnie Clearwater (Miami Beach: Grassfield Press, 1991), pp. 61-83 (p. 63).

neutral territory, both geographically and ideologically. Walter Hopps implied such a situation to a reporter from *The New York Times*:

Some bigger museums wanted to get in on the exhibition, but Duchamp was very loyal. He said that it was our idea. Since other museums did not want their Duchamp painting[s] travelling around the country, they agreed to let us have them for the exhibition, but nowhere else. That was how we wound up with this coup.<sup>763</sup>

By all accounts, what appears to have been the deciding factor in such a relatively small and obscure institution hosting the first retrospective exhibition of Duchamp's work was the simple fact that the Pasadena Art Museum was the first institution to broach the idea to Duchamp himself. It is difficult, however, to determine who specifically was responsible for initially proposing the exhibition. Walter Hopps, a curator at the Pasadena Art Museum, is usually given this credit,<sup>764</sup> though this attribution is largely based upon the fact that Hopps had met the Arensbergs as a young man and it was through them that he had been introduced to modern art in general and the work of Marcel Duchamp in particular.<sup>765</sup> This assessment is further based upon the fact that the Pasadena Art Museum's director, Thomas W. Leavitt, left Pasadena for the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in 1963 only months prior to the exhibition's opening, leaving Hopps to assume the title of "acting director" and thus credit for the completed exhibition.<sup>766</sup> It was however, Thomas Leavitt, who initially proposed the retrospective exhibition.<sup>767</sup> In support of this is the fact that Leavitt engaged in virtually all of the early correspondence relating to the exhibition.

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<sup>763</sup> Murray Schumach, 'Pasadena to see art of Duchamp,' *The New York Times*, 13 August 1963, p. 25.

<sup>764</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 252. Credit for the exhibition was likewise given to Walter Hopps in the vast majority of the contemporaneous publicity for the exhibition, much of which played heavily upon the fact that the young Hopps had visited the Arensbergs' home while a schoolchild. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4390, frames 1233-1343].

<sup>765</sup> 'Excerpts from the West Coast Duchamp Symposium, Afternoon Session, Santa Monica Public Library, 8 December 1990' (Appendix C), *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, pp. 119-121 (p. 119).

<sup>766</sup> Tashjian, 'Nothing Left to Chance,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 61.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid. Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 419.

The earliest documents relating to the planning of the exhibition are part of a three-way correspondence between Thomas Leavitt, Museum of Modern Art curator William Seitz, and Duchamp himself.<sup>768</sup> When Leavitt first directly broached the prospect of a one-man show to Duchamp, he requested the artist's assistance in selecting for exhibition "what you consider to be your most important paintings and other work."<sup>769</sup> This request for Duchamp's assistance in selecting works to include in the exhibition was both sensible and likely the norm for exhibitions centring on the work of a living artist. In this instance though, it was also more than likely motivated by an awareness of the need to broaden the base of the works displayed beyond the boundaries of the Arensberg collection in Philadelphia. As the Arensberg collection's breadth and scope were significant enough to qualify as a permanent one-man-show, Pasadena would need to surpass this collection in order to justify their own exhibition. Duchamp's response to Leavitt left little room for optimism, however, pointing out that "[o]utside of the works in the Arensberg Collection in the Philadelphia Museum of Art there are very few works that might be found."<sup>770</sup> Duchamp suggested that Leavitt might find "a few things" in the Yale University Art Gallery, "a large canvas of 1913"<sup>771</sup> in the Pierre Matisse Gallery, and "a drawing of the large glass" owned by Jeanne Reynal, before saying: "Unfortunately, this is all I know of."<sup>772</sup>

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<sup>768</sup> Letter from William Seitz to Marcel Duchamp, 22 February 1962. Letter from Thomas W. Leavitt to William Seitz, 9 February 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 410, 411].

<sup>769</sup> Letter from Thomas W. Leavitt to Marcel Duchamp, 5 April 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frame 30].

<sup>770</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Thomas W. Leavitt, 12 April 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 28-29].

<sup>771</sup> Presumably this "large canvas" was the *Network of Stoppages* of 1914, as this was the only work on canvas lent by the Pierre Matisse Gallery. The date of 1913 may refer to the second of the three layers that comprise this work. This second layer, completed in 1913, is a scaled down sketch of the large glass. 'Duchamp Exhibition,' hand-written list of works included in the exhibition. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frame 127-130]. Also, Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, no. 115, p. 166.

<sup>772</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Thomas W. Leavitt, 12 April 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 28-29].

While there is little in the way of direct correspondence between the Pasadena Art Museum and Marcel Duchamp, evidence of Duchamp's assistance in the development of the show abounds. This is particularly apparent with regard to the substantial number and size of the loans required for the exhibition. Despite the role of curator William Seitz in the early discussions about the exhibition, the Museum of Modern Art responded negatively to every loan request submitted by Thomas Leavitt. These requests included such works as the *Three Standard Stoppages*, (figure 4.10) *Fresh Widow*, (figure 4.11) *Designs for Chessmen*, (figure 5.01) and the "most crucial" work, *Passage from Virgin to Bride*.<sup>773</sup> (figure 3.22) While MoMA staunchly refused to lend the first three works, on the grounds that they were too fragile to travel, *Passage from Virgin to Bride* was ultimately made available to the exhibition "upon the recommendation of Marcel Duchamp."<sup>774</sup> Similarly, the initial negative decision on *Designs for Chessmen* was rescinded, and the *Handmade Stereopticon Slide* (figure 4.05) of 1920, was added to the list of items to be loaned.<sup>775</sup>

Similar problems were anticipated by Pasadena with regard to loans from the Arensberg collection in Philadelphia. Given the quantity of works desired from this single institution, the decision was made to offer Philadelphia the loan of up to 40 works from the Galka Scheyer collection in exchange for Philadelphia's generosity. Galka Scheyer, a friend of the Arensbergs' and a fellow collector of modern art, had amassed a collection nearly as large as the Arensbergs', at the core of which was the largest grouping of Paul Klee's work in the United States. The gesture was effective and, of the initial request for the loan of twenty-five works from the Arensberg Collection, twenty-four were approved.<sup>776</sup> The only requested work that Philadelphia

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<sup>773</sup> Letter from Thomas W. Leavitt to René d'Harnoncourt, 2 October 1962. [Microfilm reel 4389, frame 406]. Letter from Dorothy C. Miller to Thomas W. Leavitt, 9 October 1962. [Microfilm reel 4389, frame 405]. Both in Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>774</sup> Letter from Dorothy C. Miller to Thomas W. Leavitt, 28 February 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frame 404].

<sup>775</sup> Letter from Betsy Jones (MoMA) to Walter Hopps, 8 August 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frame 399].

<sup>776</sup> Letter from Thomas W. Leavitt to Carl Zigrosser, 14 May 1962. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 376-377]. Letter from Henri Marceau to Thomas W. Leavitt, 5 June 1962. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 374-375]. Both in Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the

declined to lend was Duchamp's *Glider Containing Water Mill in Neighbouring Metals*, (figure 3.18) for, as the only such work on glass to remain unbroken, this was deemed too fragile to travel.<sup>777</sup>

Curiously, the initial twenty-five work loan request did not include two of the most prominent works in Duchamp's oeuvre. Not included on the initial list were both the *Large Glass*, (figure 3.12) and the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*. (figure 1.01) The exclusion of the *Large Glass* from this initial list was not accidental. Despite the fact that the *Large Glass* was widely considered to be Duchamp's *magnum opus*, and a retrospective exhibition of his work could not be considered complete without it, Leavitt was forced to admit "I realize the shipment of that major work is very likely impossible and so it is not included in our list."<sup>778</sup> Acknowledging the centrality of this work, he continued "I should like to investigate the possibility of having a large replica or reproduction made."<sup>779</sup>

The exclusion of Duchamp's other well known work, the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, is more exceptional. As has already been indicated, it is by virtue of this work more than any other that the American public had come into contact with Duchamp and his work. The inextricable linking of Duchamp and the *Nude* in the popular press would have made the non-inclusion of the *Nude* in a retrospective show awkward if not virtually impossible. It appears, however, as though the initial exclusion of this work was purely accidental. Early plans for the layout of the exhibition, listing the works to be shown by room, include a pencilled note at the top of the final page asking: "Why is the Nude Descending a Staircase Missing?[sic]"<sup>780</sup>

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Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>777</sup> Letter from Henri Marceau to Thomas W. Leavitt, 5 June 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 374-375].

<sup>778</sup> Letter from Thomas W. Leavitt to Carl Zigrosser, 14 May 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 376-377].

<sup>779</sup> Ibid.

<sup>780</sup> Scratch Sheets, 'Marcel Duchamp – A Retrospective Exhibition, Pasadena Art Museum December 1962,' 9 May 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 148-155].

The initial list of twenty-five works was not the end of the Pasadena Art Museum's requests from the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The initial request list submitted by Thomas Leavitt had not only neglected the *Nude* in its finished version, but also the Arensberg study for the *Nude, Once More to this Stair* (figure 5.02) as well as the *Nude, No. 1*. (figure 5.03) Likewise, the initial list had neglected such works as the *Box of 1914*, (figure 5.04) assorted drawings from the Arensberg archives, and the drawing *Virgin, No. 1* (figure 3.23) from the neighbouring Gallatin collection. Nine months after the original loan request was made, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, was successfully added to the list of loans with the request: "We, and I know Mr. Duchamp as well, would be deeply grateful if you would consent to add this major piece to the list we have already requested."<sup>781</sup>

While *Nude, No. 2*, was added to the loan agreement with little difficulty,<sup>782</sup> this appeared to be the upper limits of the generosity of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. A third set of loan requests submitted by the Pasadena Art Museum finally met with resistance. An additional four works were successfully added to the loan agreement in this instance, though the request to lend *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 1*, and the 1911 study for that work were both declined. The Philadelphia Museum of Art justified its refusal by pointing out that, "we are divesting ourselves of practically everything we own of Marcel Duchamp's works."<sup>783</sup> Philadelphia's board of directors even expressed a disinclination to continue with the loan of *Nude, No. 3*, (figure 1.13) insisting that by withholding that work, "we could at least give our visiting public during the summer some contact with the Duchamp works in our collection."<sup>784</sup> Regardless of the misgivings present by the end of the negotiations, the Pasadena Art Museum borrowed a total of twenty-nine works from the Philadelphia Museum of Art, including roughly 60% of the Arensberg collection. Though it fell short of the Arensbergs' dictum that the museum should "lend anything

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<sup>781</sup> Letter from Thomas W. Leavitt to Henri Marceau, 5 February 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frame 366].

<sup>782</sup> Letter from Henri Marceau to Thomas W. Leavitt, 5 June 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 355-356].

<sup>783</sup> Ibid.

<sup>784</sup> Ibid.



that [Duchamp] wants for any plans of his,”<sup>785</sup> the substantial size of this loan would not have been possible without the “special urging”<sup>786</sup> of Duchamp.

Due largely to the Arensberg collection, loans from museums constituted approximately one half of the works displayed in the exhibition, with loans from private collectors and private galleries constituting the other half. There was, however, a third category of works displayed in this exhibition: replica works that were commissioned explicitly for this show. The motivation behind the creation of such works was two-fold: such replicas enabled the Pasadena Art Museum to fill an unfortunate gap in loanable works while simultaneously increasing the number of works coming from the museum’s own collection. As has been indicated, the fragility of Duchamp’s works on glass uniformly caused them to not be lent and only transported on rare occasions. Exacerbating this situation was the concrete stabilization of the most important such work, the *Large Glass*, into Philadelphia’s gallery floor, making it “one of those immovable objects somewhat similar to the Eiffel Tower.”<sup>787</sup>

Along similar lines, the Pasadena Art Museum was aware of the fact that they owned none of the significant works included in the exhibition. While the museum did contribute a total of twelve works to the 144 items on display,<sup>788</sup> they were all relatively minor works within Duchamp’s oeuvre. The museum’s contribution included four periodicals, for which Duchamp had designed covers, and three exhibition catalogues, which Duchamp had also designed.<sup>789</sup> Of the remaining five items contributed to the exhibition, three works were examples of multiple editions

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<sup>785</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Fiske Kimball. 7 February 1952. Box 180, Folder 9, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>786</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 421.

<sup>787</sup> Letter from Henri Marceau to Thomas W. Leavitt, 5 June 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 374-375].

<sup>788</sup> The archives indicate that there were an additional three items owned by the Pasadena Art Museum: *Genre Allegory*, *Cavalier*, and *Door: 11 Rue Larrey*. I cannot, however, confirm the museum’s ownership of any of these items, or the exhibition of *Door: 11 Rue Larrey*.

<sup>789</sup> The periodicals included were *Transition*, winter 1937 (featuring the readymade *Comb*); the cover design for *Vogue* (featuring *Genre Allegory*) as published in *VVV*, 1943; the cover design for *VVV Almanac*, 1943; and the cover of *View*, March 1945 (featuring a smoking wine bottle). The exhibition catalogue covers displayed are listed in note 844.

that are not generally considered amongst the core of Duchamp's output, and the final two pieces were commissioned for this show.<sup>790</sup>

The Pasadena Art Museum's desire to contribute a significant work of their own to the exhibition, albeit in replica, extended beyond Leavitt's initial considerations of "the possibility of having a large replica or reproduction made" of the *Large Glass*.<sup>791</sup> This early idea was soon dropped in favour of borrowing the full scale replica of the *Large Glass* that had been produced by Ulf Linde in 1961 for the Moderna Museet, Stockholm.<sup>792</sup> (figure 5.05) That the Pasadena Art Museum nonetheless wanted to possess and contribute a significant Duchampian piece can be seen in the decision to commission David Hayes to create a reproduction of *Nine Malic Moulds* (figure 5.06) one of Duchamp's preparatory studies for the *Large Glass*.<sup>793</sup> Reproducing this work entailed the creation of a life-sized, coloured photograph of the original, absent the patterning of cracks. This photographic reproduction was then meticulously cut around and glued between two panes of glass.<sup>794</sup> Once the two panes were sandwiched together, the cracks in the original work were then replicated by scoring the front of the glass pane.<sup>795</sup>

As this initial reproduction drew to a completion, Walter Hopps, then acting director of the Museum, proposed that the "facsimile editions" be expanded beyond the single replica of *Nine Malic Moulds*. This proposed expanded edition was to

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<sup>790</sup> These three works were a non-deluxe edition of the *Boîte (de ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rose Sélavy)*, an edition of *Rotoreliefs*, and a pair of the *Laundress's Aprons*.

<sup>791</sup> Letter Thomas W. Leavitt to Carl Zigrosser, 14 May 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 376-377].

<sup>792</sup> 'Duchamp Exhibition,' hand-written list of works included in the exhibition. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frame 127-130].

<sup>793</sup> David Hayes was an art historian, whose relationship to Duchamp's work and role in the Duchamp retrospectives will receive fuller attention in the next chapter.

<sup>794</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Thomas W. Leavitt, 20 February 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frame 26]. This description, reiterated on the website of the Norton Simon Museum of Art (<[http://www.nortonsimon.org/collections/browse\\_title.php?id=P.1963.38](http://www.nortonsimon.org/collections/browse_title.php?id=P.1963.38)> [accessed 25 January 2010]) is contrary to the materials listed in Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 328 (c), p. 632.

<sup>795</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 233.

further involve the *Three Standard Stoppages*, (figure 4.10) the *Rotoreliefs*, (figure 5.07) and the additional preparatory study on glass *To Be Looked at....* (figure 4.03) According to Walter Hopps's proposal, each of these pieces would be completed in an edition of four, with one set going to the Pasadena Art Museum, another to the Yale University Art Gallery, yet another to the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, and the final set to Duchamp. The cost of the reproductions was to be assumed by the three institutions, with the final set being gifted to Duchamp.<sup>796</sup>

This was not the first such edition of Duchamp's work to be commissioned. In 1961, the Galerie Rive Droite had been entrusted by Duchamp to create an edition of ten bronze replicas of *Female Fig Leaf* for commercial distribution.<sup>797</sup> (figure 7.21) A similar edition of eight bronze replicas of *Objet-dard* was produced two years later by the Galleria Schwarz.<sup>798</sup> (figure 7.17) In this instance, however, Duchamp declined the reproduction of two of the four proposed works: the *Rotoreliefs* on the grounds that he had already begun producing his own edition of one hundred "including a motorized black background,"<sup>799</sup> and the painting *To Be Looked at....*, claiming that "a facsimile...could only be too far from the original on account of the important breaks which cannot be satisfactorily reproduced."<sup>800</sup> Ultimately this programme of "facsimile editions" proved prohibitively expensive, and only *Nine Malic Moulds*, and *Three Standard Stoppages*, (figure 5.08) as well as the collage *In the Manner of Delvaux*, (figure 5.09) were replicated in a single edition for the exhibition.<sup>801</sup>

Duchamp's explanation for refusing to allow a second set of *Rotoreliefs* to be created appears perfectly legitimate and is commensurate with the size of the edition he had already begun. The reasons cited for declining permission to replicate *To Be*

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<sup>796</sup> Letter from Walter Hopps to Marcel Duchamp, 1 March 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frame 23].

<sup>797</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 219.

<sup>798</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>799</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Hopps, 8 March 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 20-22].

<sup>800</sup> Ibid.

<sup>801</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 233.

*Looked at...*, however, seems less forthright. When the *Large Glass* was recreated by Pontus Hulten and Ulf Linde in 1960, Duchamp was invited to visit the team of Swedish artists and craftsmen as they were completing this full-scale reproduction on unbreakable glass. While there, he instructed the team of workers, who had never seen the first *Large Glass* in the flesh,<sup>802</sup> on how to bring the replica more in line with the original. (figure 5.10) This guidance included such minutia as pointing out that the *Chocolate Grinder* element was too dark, and that scratching the surface of the Plexiglas would lighten its appearance.<sup>803</sup> It does not appear as though any suggestions were made regarding the cracks extant in the original *Large Glass*, and this famous feature was never included in this reproduction. The non-inclusion of the famous breaks was not, however, enough to prevent Duchamp from signing the Swedish replica “*pour copie conforme Marcel Duchamp, Stockholm, 1961*,”<sup>804</sup> a phrase that was used by Duchamp throughout his career to indicate that a replica was an accurate reflection of the original work.<sup>805</sup>

Also signed with this note of approval was Duchamp’s other re-created painting on glass, the Pasadena Art Museum’s *Nine Malic Moulds*, in which the cracks evident in the original were replicated with relative ease. Duchamp’s approval of the finished *Nine Malic Moulds* replica further underscores the incongruousness of his justification for disallowing a reproduction of *To Be Looked at...* This incongruousness necessitates the question, “Why?”, to which we will return later.

The reproductions commissioned by the Pasadena Art Museum were not the only reproductions included in this exhibition. Walter Hopps made the decision early in the planning process to prefer borrowing replicas for many of Duchamp’s works. For the reasons outlined above, virtually all of the works on glass in the retrospective exhibition were replicas on loan from the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. This included not only the *Large Glass*, but also Duchamp’s *Rotary Glass Plates (Precision Optics)*, (figure 5.11) *Fresh Widow*, (figure 5.12) and *50cc of Paris Air*.<sup>806</sup> (figure 5.13) It was not merely the works on glass that were borrowed from the

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<sup>802</sup> Ibid., p. 216, 217, 224.

<sup>803</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>804</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 404, p. 700.

<sup>805</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 21.

<sup>806</sup> *Marcel Duchamp: A Retrospective Exhibition*, ed. by Walter Hopps (Pasadena: Pasadena Art Museum, 1963), nos. 30, 66, 67, 74, n.p. Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, pp. 232-233.

Moderna Museet, however. The art critic Ulf Linde had recently held an exhibition in the Galerie Buren dedicated to Duchamp's readymades. With Duchamp's consent, this exhibition consisted entirely of replicas of the readymades, most of which were produced using only the photographs from Lebel's *Sur Marcel Duchamp* as guidance.<sup>807</sup> The works produced for the Galerie Buren exhibition included not only the aforementioned works on glass, but also a replica of *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, (figure 5.14) and *Traveller's Folding Item*.<sup>808</sup> (figure 5.15) Replicas of the readymades *Fountain*, (figure 5.16) and *Bicycle Wheel* (figure 5.17) were similarly borrowed from the American dealer Sidney Janis.<sup>809</sup>

What is curious about this borrowing of replicas is that in cases such as *50cc of Paris Air*, or *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, the original, or a replica with stronger historical links to the artist, was in the collection of an institution within the United States.<sup>810</sup> Since other items were borrowed from these institutions, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Yale University Art Gallery respectively, the implication is that, in certain instances, the replica was in fact the version that the Pasadena Art Museum preferred. Presumably, this non-reliance on available originals enabled the museum to underscore the link between Duchamp's work and that of the burgeoning arena of conceptual art by displaying replicas on equal footing with works more traditionally recognized as "originals." Such a practice would promulgate the central principle of conceptual art, the assertion that the idea conveyed by the work is what is of pre-eminent importance. The inclusion of such fundamental principles of conceptualism as givens within the organization of the exhibition provided an element of legitimacy

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<sup>807</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 224. For more information on the Galerie Buren show, or Duchamp's authorization of replicas more generally, see Francis M. Naumann's *The Art of making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999).

<sup>808</sup> 'Duchamp Exhibition,' hand-written list of works included in the exhibition. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frame 127-130].

<sup>809</sup> Ibid. Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 233.

<sup>810</sup> Both of these works were replicas, but the replica of *50cc of Paris Air* was acquired for Walter Arensberg by Roché on behalf of Duchamp. The meticulous instructions that Duchamp provided Roché included the demand that "*autant que possible*" the replacement not only have the same shape and dimensions as the original, but that it be purchased from the same shop. Letter from Duchamp to Henri-Pierre Roché, 9 May 1949; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 178, pp. 272-274. Likewise, the replica of *In Advance of the Broken Arm* in Yale's collection was selected, purchased and inscribed by Duchamp, at Katherine Dreier's request, for the Société Anonyme collection. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 332 (a), p. 636.

to the younger movement, as well as an intellectual vibrancy to an exhibition type that is by nature, backward-looking.

One must remember that, as a retrospective exhibition, works were on display that dated from as early as 1902. Early works by Duchamp such as *The Church at Blainville* (figure 3.26) were touted both within the catalogue and in the accompanying lecture by Richard Hamilton as displaying the influence of Cézanne and Fauvism.<sup>811</sup> In establishing such a firm tie between Duchamp and conceptual art, Hopps and Leavitt were not only providing art-historical justification for Duchamp's work by placing it within an art-historical continuum, they were also asserting a continuing contemporary legitimacy for Duchamp's work by casting him as the progenitor of the dominant *avant-garde* movement of the time.

That the heavy reliance upon newer replicas in their display of readymades was indeed part of an attempt to cast Duchamp as the father of conceptual art can be seen in the identity of certain of the lenders. Of the numerous versions of the readymade *Bottle Rack* available in the United States, the one borrowed by the Pasadena Art Museum was lent by the American pop artist Robert Rauschenberg.<sup>812</sup> Likewise, the version of *Female Fig Leaf* displayed was lent to the exhibition by the artist Jasper Johns.<sup>813</sup> (figure 7.20) The names of the donors for both of these items were displayed both alongside the item and within the exhibition catalogue, highlighting the fact that the identification of Duchamp as primogenitor of later *avant-garde* movements was not merely academic. Similarly, on display alongside Duchamp's *Green Box* was a copy of the recently completed translation of the *Box*'s contents by George Heard Hamilton of Yale and the British pop artist Richard Hamilton. The concrete identification of these replicas and reproductions as belonging to younger contemporary artists demonstrates that *avant-garde* and conceptual artists themselves were actively identifying Duchamp as their patron.

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<sup>811</sup> 'Richard Hamilton: Lecture Delivered Pasadena on occasion M. Duchamp Retrospective, 1963,' 2 December 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 867-878]. Walter Hopps, 'Marcel Duchamp Chronology,' in *Marcel Duchamp: A Retrospective Exhibition*, ed. by Hopps, n.p.

<sup>812</sup> *Marcel Duchamp: A Retrospective Exhibition*, ed. by Hopps, no. 54, n.p.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 104, n.p. The *Wedge of Chastity* owned by Jasper Johns was one of the authorized eight bronze replicas produced by the Galleria Schwarz in Milan. Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 233.

Correspondingly, displaying evidence of his continuing influence on the work of dominant younger artists portrayed Duchamp as an active generative force in the art world.

From a more practical standpoint, however, the equation of replicas and originals under the auspices of conceptual art additionally served to legitimize the display of replicas of non-readymade works, particularly those such as the *Large Glass* and *Nine Malic Moulds*. These replicas, standing in for otherwise central singular works, would have left the Pasadena Art Museum open to a certain amount of criticism for the incompleteness of their exhibition. These works, not created by Duchamp, and only connected to the artist by virtue of his approval, could easily have been discounted. The seamless inclusion of replica readymades, however, highlighted Duchamp's devaluation of the "original" art object and enabled the museum to legitimately identify as retrospective, an exhibition that lacked the originals of certain central works.

### **The Exhibition**

*Marcel Duchamp: A Retrospective Exhibition* opened to the public on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, 1963. The works on display had been laid out in roughly thematic groupings along a chronological progression. Upon entering the exhibition, visitors found themselves in a small gallery immediately to the right of the Pasadena Art Museum's main entrance. This room was to serve as an introduction to the uninitiated, containing uncatalogued ephemera regarding the artist. (figure 5.18) According to Walter Hopps, "The first room was kind of informal, with photographs, posters – nothing didactic, but interesting divertissements, like a theatre lobby."<sup>814</sup>

Following on from this Hollywood-style introduction, visitors moved on to the first of the exhibition galleries, which Walter Hopps described as an "early-twentieth-century salon."<sup>815</sup> (figure 5.19) The contents of this gallery, labelled "Early Work" in the exhibition catalogue, ranged from the *Church at Blainville* of 1902, through to

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<sup>814</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 421. From an interview of Walter Hopps by Tomkins. Unfortunately, as the material in this room was uncatalogued, and the installation plan has not been preserved in the museum's archives, there is very little information about the nature of this antechamber, and none regarding the images displayed.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid.

later Fauve-inspired works such *Portrait of the Artist's Father* from 1910. (figure 3.19) Modest in size, the hanging space in this gallery was increased slightly by the addition of a temporary wall, which enabled some of Duchamp's earliest known drawings to face visitors as they entered the gallery. (figure 5.19a) The contents of this gallery had all been produced while Duchamp was between the ages of fifteen and twenty-three.<sup>816</sup> Duchamp is recorded as expressing surprise at Hopps's desire to include such early works<sup>817</sup> and the comparative lack of inventiveness in the design of this gallery is commensurate with the lack of emphasis placed on the works by Duchamp.

Despite their perhaps diminished importance in Duchamp's own eyes, the display of these early works had a dual role in the promotion of Duchamp's career by the Pasadena Art Museum. First, the inclusion of these early works helped to place the artist within the pantheon of art history. These works established Duchamp as a genuine artist, sensitive to contemporaneous developments and capable of adopting and adapting the developments of the *avant-garde*. Moreover, in establishing Duchamp's conventional legitimacy as an artist, these works served to pre-empt assertions that his identification as anti-artist stems from a lack of painterly ability.

In addition to placing Duchamp within the art historical continuum, the inclusion of his early works helped the Pasadena Art Museum cast Duchamp in the role of genius. In the lecture given by Richard Hamilton in conjunction with the exhibition, Hamilton described Duchamp's early work as "precocious," before insisting that "Duchamp emerges as a distinguished Fauve, a colourist of originality and daring."<sup>818</sup> By insisting that the innovation in Duchamp's young work was comparable to that apparent in his later work, the exhibition casts Duchamp in the role of the archetypal genius whose potential for greatness can be seen in even his most modest creations.

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<sup>816</sup> Knowledge regarding the early work of Duchamp would be greatly expanded when the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery assembled the exhibition *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* in 1965. More will be said about this exhibition in the next chapter.

<sup>817</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 421.

<sup>818</sup> 'Richard Hamilton: Lecture Delivered Pasadena on occasion M. Duchamp Retrospective, 1963,' 2 December 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 867-878].



Following on from Duchamp's "Early Work," visitors to the exhibition entered a gallery devoted to Duchamp's fascination with the game of chess. Adorning the walls of this gallery were *The Chess Game*, of 1910, (figure 3.24) and *Portrait of Chess Players* from 1911. (figure 1.06) These two paintings not only provided the thematic anchor for the room, as the only two traditional paintings Duchamp ever produced that deal directly with chess as a subject, but they also provided a unique opportunity to intellectualize Duchamp's transition from the Post-Impressionistic works in the first to the later works on display. Duchamp's *The Chess Game* belongs, stylistically, with Duchamp's "Early Works." The *Portrait of Chess Players*, on the other hand, along with the four preparatory studies for the work that were also on display, show a decided Cubistic influence and fascination with the subject's psychological state. These two works, so divergent in style yet linked in subject matter, frame the transition from his Fauve inspired works to his later Cubistic paintings in a distinctly intellectualized fashion. Not only does this arrangement imply a link between the stylistic transition and Duchamp's interest in chess,<sup>819</sup> it also implies that this change was born in part out of the desire for a stylistic method that could adequately capture the intellectual activity implicit in the game.

This gallery, called "Chess: paintings, drawings + the game" in the exhibition catalogue, also contained possibly the most innovative "work of art" on display in the exhibition. Listed in the catalogue as "Standard Chess Equipment,"<sup>820</sup> this work consisted of a small chess table, chess set, and two chairs situated in the centre of the gallery floor, surrounded by velvet roping. (figure 5.20) Not a notable chess set or table in their own right, this arrangement provided the unique opportunity for visitors to understand what Duchamp was advocating when he asked: "Why isn't my chess playing an art activity? A chess game is very plastic. You construct it. It's mechanical sculpture and with chess one creates beautiful problems and that beauty is

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<sup>819</sup> The link between Duchamp's chess interest and his artistic development is somewhat misleading. While Duchamp played chess recreationally from his early childhood, his competitive interest was not sparked until nearly a decade after the paintings displayed in this room were created. Vlastimil Fiala has identified his transition "from an average chess amateur... into a very strong player in the master category" as beginning in late 1920, following his entry into the Marshall Chess Club. Vlastimil Fiala, *The Chess Biography of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968); Volume One: The Early Chess Career of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1925)*, (Olomouc, Czech Republic: Moravian Chess, 2002) p. 31.

<sup>820</sup> *Marcel Duchamp: A Retrospective Exhibition*, ed. by Hopps, no. 23, n.p.

made with the head and hands.”<sup>821</sup> The inclusion of “Standard Chess Equipment” alongside some of Duchamp’s preparatory designs for chess sets, and two examples of the travel set he designed, (figure 5.21) allowed for exhibition visitors to encounter the games played by Duchamp and others as works of art in the same vein as the other works in the exhibition. Moreover, Duchamp’s two fully realised chess-oriented works were hung on the centre of the two available gallery walls,<sup>822</sup> such that anyone viewing the chess play head-on would view the game as explicitly framed by *The Chess Game* or *Portrait of Chess Players*. With Duchamp’s 1909 *The Chess Game* as the only work hung on the wall opposite the entrance from the earlier gallery, this installation ensured that every visitor following the proscribed path would encounter the “Standard Chess Equipment” so framed.

The inclusion of performative chess play as a work of art in this exhibition served to further identify Duchamp as a prognosticator of new artistic developments, by linking his chess play to the recently popularized art form, the “happening.” During the exhibition’s opening reception, the display of “Standard Chess Equipment” proved distinctly popular, with small crowds gathering to watch Duchamp compete with individuals such as Isaac Kashdan, chess editor for the *Los Angeles Times*,<sup>823</sup> the artist Frode Dann, then art critic for the *Pasadena Star-News*,<sup>824</sup> and Walter Hopps. (figure 5.22) That this was, for Duchamp especially, to be a piece of performance art is evident in Duchamp’s wish to have a boxing ring erected in the gallery for the chess matches.<sup>825</sup> Less combatively, the link with performance art was drawn by the photographer, Julian Wasser, hired to document the opening. He arranged for Duchamp to be photographed playing chess with a nude

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<sup>821</sup> Truman Capote, *Observations*, ed. by Richard Avendon (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 55. Reprinted in Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 72.

<sup>822</sup> One of the walls in gallery 11 was largely taken up by leaded glass windows, and another had the entrance to gallery 12 in the centre of the wall.

<sup>823</sup> Letter from Walter Hopps to Mr. and Mrs. Marcel Duchamp, 1 October 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 10-11].

<sup>824</sup> Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, p. 186. Dann’s role in the insular Los Angeles art world had already led to contact with Duchamp’s work. The Arensbergs had hired Dann to complete the restoration and cleaning of their collection following the sudden death of their long-time conservator, Mary-Anne Adler, during the transfer of their collection to Philadelphia.

<sup>825</sup> Interview of Walter Hopps by Dickran Tashjian, 15 August 1990. Quoted in Tashjian, ‘Nothing Left to Chance,’ in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 74.

Eve Babitz at a table placed in front of the *Large Glass*, creating one of the most enduring images associated with the exhibition.<sup>826</sup> (figure 5.23)

Though the identification of chess as art was frequently suggested by Duchamp,<sup>827</sup> the exhibition of “Standard Chess Equipment” was the first time that his suggestion had been put into practice. A longstanding fan of exhibition chess games, Duchamp had seen many of the greatest chess players of the century playing the game as a similar public performance. In fact, the earliest recorded game of chess played by Duchamp was as a competitor in an appropriately Dadaist exhibition of simultaneous chess play against an eight-year-old chess prodigy from Poland. Of the twenty simultaneous competitors, Duchamp was one of the only four who did not lose to the little boy.<sup>828</sup>

The decision to include games of chess as performance pieces not only helped cast Duchamp as a father of modern performance art, but it also forced the audience to see him as a contemporary practitioner. Despite the inclusion of relatively recent pieces in later galleries, this was the one exhibit in this retrospective in which the viewing public encountered Duchamp as an active artist. Duchamp would even reprise this role five years later alongside John Cage in the collaborative musical performance *Réunion*. (figure 5.24) This later performance would again involve Duchamp playing chess, in the centre of a stage, against John Cage on an apparently equally simple chess board. The movement of their chess pieces in *Réunion*, however, triggered a chance sequence of sounds, which provided the accompanying score.

Following on from the chess gallery, visitors found themselves in a gallery devoted to Duchamp’s transitional Cubo-Futurist works from 1911 to 1912. (figure 5.25) Described in the exhibition catalogue under the dual headings of “Climactic Work ...of oil on canvas, 1911-12,” and “...out of cubism and into a

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<sup>826</sup> Eve Babitz was a self-described “art groupie/art model” who was friends with both Julian Wasser and Walter Hopps. Paul Karlstrom, ‘Oral history interview with Eve Babitz’ (14 June 2000), Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/babitz00.htm>> [accessed 27 March 2008].

<sup>827</sup> Marcel Duchamp, ‘Address before the New York State Chess Association,’ 30 August 1952, in Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 72. Cabanne, *Dialogues*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>828</sup> Fiala, *The Chess Biography of Marcel Duchamp; Volume One*, pp. 21-27.

mechanomorphology, 1912,” this room dealt with the intense period of painterly development in which several iconographic elements of the *Large Glass* made their first appearance. In keeping with the new-found angularity of the works on display, the display itself was angular in design, with none of the paintings hung directly upon the gallery walls. Instead, Walter Hopps opted to hang the paintings from a free-standing, accordion-folded wall, along with three additional free-standing temporary surfaces. Interestingly, as this room contained both the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* and *No. 3, Virgin, No. 1* (figure 3.23) and *No. 2*, (figure 5.26) and *The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes* (figure 1.05) and *The King and Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes*, (figure 5.27) Walter Hopps opted not to place any of these pairings in such a way that they were easily seen in conjunction with one another. In fact, such natural pairings were hung either across the room from one another or, in the case of the two versions of *Nude*, nearly back-to-back.

The effect of this unorthodox hanging appears to have been to divide the works on display into three groupings, each dominated by three paintings. The three works that comprise each of these groups are hung such that two of the works face one another within the “V” shape of the accordion-folded wall, with the third painting hung upon a free-standing wall so as to face the v-shaped alcove. The works in each of these three groupings create a progression, from right to left, marking out the development of the female figure that will ultimately become the *Bride* in the *Large Glass*.<sup>829</sup>

Upon entering this gallery, the rightmost such group contains the paintings *Portrait (Dulcinea)*, (figure 5.28) paired with *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (figure 1.01) along the angular wall, with *Virgin, No. 1* (figure 3.23) adorning the floating wall. All of these paintings show Duchamp’s early cubist explorations of the female form. Beginning with *Dulcinea*, the female figure is shown descending the picture plane in progressive states of undress. This preliminary exploration into movement and the female form was followed by the *Nude, No. 2*, who was then

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<sup>829</sup> John Golding, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (London: Allen Lane, 1973). More detailed information on the iconographic development of the Female, upper region of the *Large Glass* can be found in Golding’s work.

transmuted into the *Virgin, No. 1*. The second, transitional, grouping pairs the *Nude, No. 3* (figure 1.13) and *The King and Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes*, (figure 5.27) with *The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes* (figure 1.05) on the freestanding wall. Here the figure of the nude is subsumed into the background, as the figures of the *King* and *Queen*, prototypes for the *Bride* and *Bachelors*, rise to the fore. The grouping closest to the next gallery shows the final transmutation of this enigmatic figure. In uniting the *Virgin, No. 2*, (figure 5.26) the *Passage from Virgin to Bride*, (figure 3.22) and the *Bride* (figure 3.16) as the final trio of paintings, the metamorphosis of the female figure is completed and prepared to be “stripped bare” anon.

With the groundwork for the iconography of the *Large Glass* so laid, visitors entered the largest of the exhibition galleries. The focal point of this gallery was unquestionably the life-sized replica of the *Large Glass* on loan from the Moderna Museet. (figure 5.29) This substantial piece stood at the centre of the gallery space, directly confronting visitors as they entered. Hung on the walls of the gallery surrounding this piece were a combination of preparatory studies for the *Large Glass* interspersed amongst a substantial selection of readymades. As has already been mentioned, linking the readymades and the *Large Glass* in replica helped establish the identification of Duchamp as the forebear of conceptual art. An additional effect of interspersing the readymades amongst the preparatory studies, however, was the equating of the production of the readymades with the production of the *Large Glass*.

Though Duchamp developed the concept of the readymade concurrently with his period of active work on the *Large Glass*, the two activities had traditionally been considered to be wholly separate spheres within Duchamp’s artistic output. As Richard Hamilton described the situation to Duchamp:

This is one of the great paradoxes of your work, the fact that at one and the same time you were working on a very much controlled, intellectual and disciplined major work, and at the same time you were producing things without any effort at all on your part.<sup>830</sup>

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<sup>830</sup> Richard Hamilton interview of Marcel Duchamp, for the BBC Radio programme *Monitor*, recorded 27 September 1961. Transcript of interview exists in Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition

The concurrent production of the *Large Glass* and the readymades is one of Duchamp's great paradoxes. These two disparate strains in Duchamp's oeuvre do not lend themselves easily to overt visual or theoretical associations.<sup>831</sup> As Walter Hopps described him within the catalogue, however, Duchamp was "a system of paradox in resonance,"<sup>832</sup> and the union of these two disparate strains is important to an understanding of the whole of his body of work. That this union was important to Duchamp can be seen in Walter Hopps's recollection that Duchamp requested the *Large Glass* and readymades be displayed together.<sup>833</sup> This was not, however, the first time that such a visual link had been drawn between these two spheres. Twenty-two years earlier, within his portable retrospective *De ou Par Marcel Duchamp ou Rrose Sélavy*, or the *Boîte-en-Valise*, Duchamp had forced exactly the same comparison.

Within the layout of the *Boîte-en-Valise*, the replica of the *Large Glass* is also the central element. (figure 5.36) The centrally positioned replica of the *Large Glass* on acetate is surrounded on virtually all sides by replicas of the various readymades. Specifically, the *Large Glass* is flanked immediately to the left by a vertical panel, to which are attached from top to bottom, miniature versions of *50cc of Paris Air*, *Traveller's Folding Item*, and *Fountain*. Reiterating the links drawn by the placement of these items within the *Boîte-en-Valise*, not only was the *Large Glass* surrounded by readymades, but the aforementioned readymades were displayed in Pasadena in the same vertical alignment. In choosing to make the source of this element of the display programme so apparent, Hopps and Duchamp were not only linking these two disparate strains, they were also underscoring the fact that this retrospective exhibition was the fruition of the "one man show in a suitcase," the *Boîte-en-Valise*.

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records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 879-893].

<sup>831</sup> An account of the associations that have been made between the readymades and *Large Glass* can be found in William Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain*, (Houston: Fine Art Press, 1989).

<sup>832</sup> Walter Hopps, 'Marcel Duchamp: a system of paradox in resonance,' in *Marcel Duchamp: A Retrospective Exhibition*, ed. by Hopps, n.p.

<sup>833</sup> Based upon conversations between William Camfield and Walter Hopps, particularly on 6 August 1987; in William Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain*, (Houston: Fine Art Press, 1989), p. 109. A different account, asserting that the decision to hang the *Large Glass* and the readymades together was made jointly by Duchamp and Hopps, can be found in Tashjian, 'Nothing Left to Chance,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 70.

Walter Hopps has recollected that, during the preparations for the retrospective exhibition, Duchamp affirmed the theoretical associations drawn by Ulf Linde regarding the vertical display of *50cc of Paris Air*, *Traveller's Folding Item*, and *Fountain*, alongside the *Large Glass*, saying “something to the effect that they were like ‘readymade talk of what goes on in the *Glass*.’”<sup>834</sup> The importance of this theoretical association notwithstanding, there were approximately fifteen other readymades sharing the gallery space with the *Large Glass*, varying in both nature and age. Thus, while acknowledging and reinforcing associations involving certain readymades, there must also have been a simultaneous desire to deal with the readymades as a collective whole. This broader scale association between the readymades as a group and the *Large Glass*, within this the largest and most visually striking of the galleries in the exhibition, indicates a desire to underscore their unity as Duchamp's two most significant art historical contributions.

Treating the readymades as a collective group, they are far too diverse to tie to the *Large Glass*. Beyond their concurrent creation however, there remain certain unifying characteristics that were brought out in the display programme, particularly relating to the intellectual nature of these two creations. In the case of the *Large Glass*, Duchamp has long insisted that the work cannot be experienced in a strictly visual manner; it is meant to be experienced in conjunction with the notes found in the *Green Box*. Similarly, while Duchamp remained cagey with interviewers when it came to theorizing about the readymades, one point he was willing to establish in both word and deed was the “lack of uniqueness” inherent to the readymade, insisting that “the replica of a ‘readymade’ deliver[s] the same message; in fact nearly every one of the ‘readymades’ existing today is not an original in the conventional sense.”<sup>835</sup> In both works, it is the concepts embodied by the physical object that is of importance, rather than any of the work's physical attributes.

Thus, in their deconsecration of the physical object, both the readymades and the *Large Glass* set necessary precedents for later developments such as performance art, conceptual art, pop art and neo-dadaism. By combining these two art historical

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<sup>834</sup> Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain*, p. 109.

<sup>835</sup> Marcel Duchamp, ‘*Apropos of ‘Readymades,’*’ speech given at the Museum of Modern Art, 19 October 1961; in *Marchand du Sel*, ed. by Sanouillet and Peterson, pp. 141-142.

developments in this climactic gallery, Duchamp's two most important contributions to twentieth century art were offered up to the viewer. In addition to casting the two components of this gallery as Duchamp's monumental contributions to future art, the cerebral nature of the works on display helped to portray Duchamp as an innovative and distinctly intellectual genius.

While the *Large Glass* was in the largest gallery with the most significant visual impact, there were two more small galleries available to visitors. The entrances to these two final galleries were positioned on either side of the hallway that led from the gallery containing the *Large Glass* out onto the central courtyard of the Pasadena Art Museum. To the left, as the visitor headed down this hallway, was a gallery devoted to Duchamp's optical experiments. This room prominently contained a larger than life replica of the motorized work, *Rotary Glass Plates (Precision Optics)*, (figure 5.11) borrowed from the Moderna Museet.<sup>836</sup> Mounted on the wall next to the *Rotary Glass Plates* were Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs* (figure 5.07) and *Disks Inscribed with Puns*, (figure 5.30) which had each been attached to a motorized, magnetized, wall mounted turntable.

The objects in this gallery, referred to as "Optical Works" in the exhibition catalogue,<sup>837</sup> lend themselves easily to association with the then nascent op art movement. The op artists would actively identify these works as the forerunners of their creations only a few years later.<sup>838</sup> In the planning stages of the exhibition, however, it appears as though Walter Hopps intended to use this gallery to draw a connection between Duchamp's optical experiments and other *avant-garde* movements. As early as December 1962, planning documents describe this grouping of works as "use of transitory staged, or arranged, event or occurrence [proto 'environment-happening']".<sup>839</sup> This explicit attempt to cast the optical experiments as

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<sup>836</sup> The replica produced by Ulf Linde was in fact larger than the original due to difficulties in obtaining the measurements of the original from the Yale University Art Gallery. Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, pp. 215-216.

<sup>837</sup> *Marcel Duchamp: A Retrospective Exhibition*, ed. by Hopps, n.p.

<sup>838</sup> John Canaday, 'Art That Pulses, Quivers and Fascinates,' *The New York Times*, 21 February 1965, Sunday Magazine, p.12.

<sup>839</sup> Scratch Sheet, 'Marcel Duchamp – A Retrospective Exhibition, Pasadena Art Museum December 1962,' 9 May 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 148].



the first forays into the realm of the happening was presumably based upon the temporal and kinetic nature of these works. The lack of a human or performative element in these works, however, appears to have stymied this plan. Despite the desire to link Duchamp's optical experiments with more cerebral explorations in modern art, the gallery was ultimately employed to explore Duchamp's most purely visual explorations.

The final gallery in the exhibition concluded the roughly chronological exploration of Duchamp's oeuvre with works that had been created between 1935 and 1959.<sup>840</sup> The central focus of this gallery is generally recounted as being the *Boîte-en-Valise*,<sup>841</sup> though it also included works as initially disparate as photographs of Duchamp's exhibition designs and Duchamp's cover designs for magazines such as *View*, *Minotaur* and *VVV*. (figure 5.31) One could be forgiven for believing this room to be merely a catch-all for Duchamp's later, somewhat schizophrenic, activities. In fact, most accounts of Duchamp's retrospective refer to the contents of this gallery as nothing more than "ephemera."<sup>842</sup> Closer inspection of the works on display, however, reveals the contents of this gallery as a careful summation of the implied argument put forth by the exhibition as a whole.

An indication of the organizational theme for the gallery can be gleaned from the exhibition notes, wherein the contents are described as "work pertaining to the 'metaphysics[']' (or ametaphysics) of art reproduction + (mass media) – Distributed printed matter."<sup>843</sup> The majority of the work in this gallery falls into one of two groups, each of which serves to challenge traditional notions of aesthetics. The first of these groups, which likely spawned the designation "ephemera," is comprised of Duchamp's work in the arena of graphic design, while the second includes more traditional works also produced in multiple editions. Works in the first group include

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<sup>840</sup> This room (gallery 6) is the only one of the galleries in the exhibition, aside from the preliminary "theatre lobby" gallery, for which there are no extant drawings indicating the layout of cases and the hanging of paintings.

<sup>841</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 422. Tashjian, 'Nothing Left to Chance,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 70.

<sup>842</sup> Ibid. Ibid.

<sup>843</sup> Scratch Sheet, 'Marcel Duchamp – A Retrospective Exhibition, Pasadena Art Museum December 1962,' 9 May 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 148].

not only the aforementioned published magazine cover designs, but also covers for exhibition catalogues,<sup>844</sup> the cover for a friend's collection of poetry,<sup>845</sup> and original maquettes for both used and unused cover designs and illustrations.<sup>846</sup> (figure 5.32)

The second, more traditional, grouping included Duchamp's *Objet-dard*, *Female Fig Leaf* and *Wedge of Chastity*, (figure 5.33) as well as the aforementioned *Boîte-en-Valise*. The identity of each of these works as a singular example within a larger series was highlighted within this gallery through the display of two different examples of each work. In the case of the three sculptures, Duchamp lent the original for exhibition, while a second example of each sculpture, taken from a series of authorized reproductions, was also displayed.<sup>847</sup> The *Boîte-en-Valise* was likewise presented in two of its many manifestations, once by a deluxe edition<sup>848</sup> encased in the leather case from which its name is derived, and again in a non-deluxe *Boîte* purchased by Pasadena for the exhibition.<sup>849</sup>

One can only assume that this emphasis on the reproducibility of Duchamp's later works was intended, in part, to be seen as an extension of his development of the readymades and the deconsecration of the original within art. As the founding principle behind the readymade was that the mass produced object could be elevated to the status of "art," the later work of this gallery was presented as the transmutation of the individual work of art into a mass produced object.

More interesting than the "metaphysical" considerations raised by the work in this gallery, however, is the role of this gallery within the exhibition as a whole.

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<sup>844</sup> These included the cover for the *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition, 1942; the cover for the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* exhibition, 1947; *Balloon*, cover for the "Duchamp-Picabia" catalogue, 1953; and the cover for the *International Dada Exhibition* at the Sidney Janis Gallery, 1953.

<sup>845</sup> Andre Breton's *Young Cherry Trees Secured Against Hares*, 1946.

<sup>846</sup> *Genre Allegory* of 1943, *Jacket* of 1955 and *Equilibrium*, 1958.

<sup>847</sup> For *Objet-dard*, 1951, the replica was from an edition of eight produced by the Galleria Schwarz in Milan, in 1962. For *Female Fig Leaf*, 1951, the replica was taken from an edition of ten produced by the Galerie Rive Droite, Paris, in 1961. The replica of *Wedge of Chastity* was from an edition of eight produced by the Galleria Schwarz earlier in 1963. *Marcel Duchamp: A Retrospective Exhibition*, ed. by Hopps, nos. 98, 100 & 104, n.p.

<sup>848</sup> While the specific *Boîte-en-Valise* displayed is not noted in the exhibition records, it was most likely number 0/XX, originally produced for Kay Boyle. Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, p. 186.

<sup>849</sup> The non-deluxe *Boîte* purchased by the Pasadena Art Museum was likely from "Series E", which finished production in 1963. Tashjian, 'Nothing Left to Chance,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 67. Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, p. 300.

Throughout the retrospective, it had been continually reasserted to the visitor that Duchamp's role as an artist was not merely historical in nature. Instead, Duchamp was cast as both a mentor to contemporary artists and the innovator responsible for the majority of *avant-garde* movements. In this gallery, both of those strands were brought together, along with the final declaration that Duchamp was, himself, still artistically active.

Duchamp's role as prophet of the *avant-garde*, initially raised through associations with performance art within the chess gallery, can be seen again in the final gallery. Enlarged photographs of Duchamp's own work in exhibition design for the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* of 1938 (figure 5.34) and *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition in 1942 (figure 5.35) adorned the walls. Duchamp's contributions to these exhibitions, altering the environment and demanding interaction with the viewer, encouraged identification as proto-happenings or installation pieces. The same can be said of his shop window displays, which were also represented in photographic form. Within the display cases of this gallery, Duchamp's illustrations and cover designs serve to reiterate his position as the father of pop art and neo-Dadaism through representations of his continued exploration of the boundaries between mass media and high art.

Similarly, the casting of Duchamp as active in the contemporary art world through his association and influence over younger contemporary artists is repeated in this gallery. In addition to the display of a replica of the *Bottle Rack* owned by Robert Rauschenberg and the translation of the notes from the *Boîte Verte* by Richard Hamilton in earlier galleries, the replica of *Female Fig Leaf* lent by Jasper Johns was on display in this final gallery. The inclusion of an additional such loan from the collection of a younger active artist served to drive home the identification of Duchamp as "lubricant to other artists."<sup>850</sup>

Finally, the contents of this last gallery, focusing on Duchamp's later works, served to show that Duchamp was not merely a prophetic innovator of the *avant-*

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<sup>850</sup> Untitled and undated scratch page. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frame 117].

*garde* and a mentor to those who came after him; this work showed Duchamp as an active and innovative contemporary artist in his own right. This exhibition was the second instance, following the publication of his *catalogue raisonné* four years previously, in which Duchamp's much touted claims of retirement and identity as an anti-artist had been authoritatively challenged. In this gallery, Duchamp's "underground works"<sup>851</sup> were unveiled, in many cases for the first time. As Richard Hamilton claimed in his accompanying lecture, "Suddenly the image is destroyed, 'Marcel Duchamp Anti-Artist' is revealed as a fake and it only took his work to do it."<sup>852</sup>

## Underground

Duchamp's "underground works" within the final gallery appear to have made Walter Hopps optimistic about the possibility of displaying additional undocumented works by Duchamp. "An interesting question (with a yes possibility): [did] M. D. produce oil paintings in [the] last 30 years?"<sup>853</sup> Hopps notoriously pursued this "yes possibility" by asking Duchamp over dinner at the Pepper Mill restaurant: "If there were something you had been working on privately, would this have been the show that you would have wanted it to be seen."<sup>854</sup> Duchamp's response is taken to be the most overt reference made to the *Étant Donnés* during his lifetime. "If there were such a work that I was working on in secret, this would not be the occasion where it would have been shown,"<sup>855</sup>

Nonetheless, Walter Hopps has suggested that Duchamp included within this retrospective exhibition, clues to the existence of the still secret and unfinished *Étant*

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<sup>851</sup> Scratch Sheet, 'Marcel Duchamp – A Retrospective Exhibition, Pasadena Art Museum December 1962,' 9 May 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 148].

<sup>852</sup> 'Richard Hamilton: Lecture Delivered Pasadena on occasion M. Duchamp Retrospective, 1963,' 2 December 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 867-878].

<sup>853</sup> Scratch Sheet, 'Marcel Duchamp – A Retrospective Exhibition, Pasadena Art Museum December 1962,' 9 May 1962. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 148].

<sup>854</sup> 'Excerpts from the West Coast Duchamp Symposium,' (Appendix C), *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 121. This exchange was originally quoted, though with slightly different wording, in Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, p. 186.

<sup>855</sup> Ibid.

*Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage.* (figure 7.01) Hopps has asserted that the pen, ink, chocolate and talcum powder drawing, *Moonlight on the Bay at Basswood* (figure 7.16) was “the first of many surrogates of the landscape in *Étant Donnés*.”<sup>856</sup> Hopps cited the unusual nature of this item, the only hand-made non-multiple in the final gallery, the difficulty in borrowing the piece for the exhibition,<sup>857</sup> and that “Duchamp made a particular point throughout the organization of the show to make sure this piece would be in it.”<sup>858</sup>

It may be the case that, as the only discernable landscape produced by Duchamp during the stated period of work on *Étant Donnés*,<sup>859</sup> this was an early study for the distant background of his last work. The prospect of Duchamp including hints to his secret work in progress, however, returns us to the question raised by the exclusion of the painting on glass, *To Be Looked at....* (figure 4.03) If Duchamp was willing to include a hint of his secret work in this exhibition, what could be the reason behind his refusal to allow Pasadena to create a replica of *To be Looked at...?* As has already been stated, the reasons Duchamp gave for refusing to allow this painting on glass to be reproduced appear less than forthright, particularly within the context of the other replicas of works on glass that he had authorized. One potential reason for Duchamp's opposition to the inclusion of this painting on glass in the Pasadena Art Museum's proposed “facsimile edition” is the close association between *To Be Looked at...* and *Étant Donnés*.

*To Be Looked at...* was the only one of Duchamp's fully realized studies for the *Large Glass* that was never included in the “definitively unfinished” final product. This initial realization of what became the *Oculist Witnesses* element of the *Large Glass*, deals with the portion of the *Large Glass* narrative in which the “splashes” of bachelor gas emitted from the *Seven Sieves* are concentrated and channelled back

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<sup>856</sup> Ibid. A similar assessment of the role of *Moonlight on the Bay at Basswood* in the development of the iconography of *Étant Donnés* can be found in D'Hamoncourt and Hopps, *Étant Donnés*, p. 26.

<sup>857</sup> Beyond Hopps's recollections, there is no evidence within the written records of the organization of the exhibition to indicate that there was a particular difficulty in borrowing this drawing.

<sup>858</sup> ‘Excerpts from the West Coast Duchamp Symposium,’ (Appendix C), *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 120. This also, is not corroborated in the written records of the exhibition.

<sup>859</sup> The dates attributed to Duchamp's work on *Étant Donnés* are 1946 to 1966. The only other mature work of Duchamp's to include a landscape motif is the assisted readymade *Pharmacie* of 1914.

towards the Bride, ostensibly in the form of the ten *Shots*.<sup>860</sup> The predominantly functional nature of this element is, however, belied by the implicitly observational titles given to both of its incarnations. We are never told exactly what the *Oculist Witnesses* are witnessing, and the object of the imperative *To Be Looked at...* is equally unspecified. We can however assume, by virtue of the fact that all activity within the Bachelors' domain is directed towards a single goal, that this element serves the additional purpose of "witnessing" or "looking at" the stripping bare of the *Bride*.

The title, *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour*, however, implies more than just the existence of a passive, detached "witnessing." The exceptionally long and overbearing title of the study forces the viewer into the active role of voyeur. It has been noted elsewhere that the *Oculist Witnesses* within the *Large Glass* encourage a similar sense of identification on the part of the viewer;<sup>861</sup> however, this effect is much more subtle than the directive given by *To Be Looked at...* Moreover, there is greater specificity to the "looking" within the earlier study, as the lenses attached to the glass not only coalesce the splashes of bachelor gas, but also indicate a central peep-hole through which the viewer is to look. This central magnifying lens, the only feature of this study that was carried over to the *Large Glass*,<sup>862</sup> is the focal point of the study *To be Looked at...*, drawing connections between this work and the erotically charged prospect of a peep-show.

Duchamp's final work, *Étant Donnés*, similarly forces the viewer into the active role of voyeur. (figure 7.02) The viewer is no longer being instructed by the title of the work, instead, by including another strategically placed peep-hole, the viewer's own curiosity impels them to partake in the action demanded by the work – the witnessing of the bride. The use of the peep-hole not only conjures curiosity but

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<sup>860</sup> For more information regarding the narrative aspect of the *Large Glass*, see John Golding, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (London: Allen Lane, 1973).

<sup>861</sup> Golding, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, p. 76.

<sup>862</sup> Though the magnifying lens was never attached to the glass in the *Large Glass*, we can safely assume that the thickly ringed circle positioned atop the *Oculist Witnesses* and between the two arms of the *Scissors* was intended for such a purpose. That this element was carried over from *To be Looked at...* can be discerned from the fact that the non-perspectival circle positioned above the three *Witnesses* never appears in any other preparatory studies for this element.

also connotations of the erotic, fulfilled to some extent in the later work. These two works are further united by virtue of the level of control Duchamp exerted over the viewer's experience. The element of control within the very title of *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour* is overt and unmissable. *Étant Donnés*, however, employs a more subtle, and more thoroughgoing, control over the viewer by arousing the viewer's curiosity, then strictly limiting the viewer's access to the work.<sup>863</sup> Only one person can experience the work at a time, and despite the desire to move around the three-dimensional space, it can be seen only from one specific, predetermined viewpoint.

The identification of *To Be Looked at...* as a preparatory or nascent work in the development of *Étant Donnés* would not necessarily have precluded its display in the Pasadena Art Museum exhibition, as is evidenced by the appearance of *Moonlight on the Bay at Basswood*. Close developmental ties to an unfinished work would, however, preclude the prospect of involving the work in the art market.<sup>864</sup> While this series of replicas was proposed by a museum rather than a gallery, as was more frequently the case with replicas of Duchamp's work, it is possible that the Pasadena Art Museum's proposal resembled too closely the arrangements he had entered into with private galleries regarding the reproduction of other works. Moreover, had Duchamp permitted the non-commercial replication of *To Be Looked at...*, he would have opened up potential problems should a private gallery have proposed the commercial expansion of the Pasadena Art Museum's limited series of editions.

### **The *Boîte-en Valise***

Another of Duchamp's works on display in the final gallery also held greater import than initially appeared to be the case. As the most noted work in the final gallery, the *Boîte-en-Valise* provided the theoretical link between Duchamp's graphic design projects, his exhibition design endeavours, and his more traditional small sculptures reproduced in commercial editions. On a broader scale than this, however,

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<sup>863</sup> For a fuller account of the experience of *Étant Donnés: 1° La Chute d'Eau, 2° Le Gaz d'Éclairage*, see chapter seven.

<sup>864</sup> For more information on Duchamp's relationship with the art market, see Michelle Lee, 'Marcel Duchamp: Travelling Salesman of Art' (unpublished MSc thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2004), pp. 18-31.

the *Boîte-en-Valise* had a significant influence on the design and appearance of the retrospective exhibition itself. (figure 5.36)

The *Boîte-en-Valise*'s identity as "a small museum, a portable museum, so to speak,"<sup>865</sup> and "a one-man show in a suitcase" have led many to comment upon the relationship between this work and its ultimate realization in Pasadena. According to Walter Hopps, it was Duchamp's idea to hang the readymades and the *Large Glass* together, replicating the links drawn between the two within the *Boîte*.<sup>866</sup> As has already been stated, Hopps has further related that Duchamp affirmed theorizations by Ulf Linde regarding the significance of the vertical hanging of the readymades *50cc of Paris Air*, *Traveller's Folding Item*, and *Fountain*, and their relationship to the *Large Glass*.

The replication of this most prominent element of the *Boîte-en-Valise* has been identified by many commentators as proof that Duchamp did, in fact, envision the *Boîte* as a miniature retrospective exhibition.<sup>867</sup> In addition to this prominent and oft noticed point of confluence, there were other elements of the *Boîte* that influenced the layout and design of the retrospective exhibition. Francis Naumann has pointed out that "the separation of works into the different galleries of the museum echoed the internal divisions and compartments of the valise."<sup>868</sup> A less subtle connection however, can be seen in the unorthodox hanging of the paintings within the gallery devoted to Duchamp's Cubo-Futurist paintings. The free-standing accordion-folded wall upon which the majority of the works in this gallery are hung call to mind the less attended to *tirettes*,<sup>869</sup> which pull out to the left and right of the *Large Glass* when the *Boîte-en-Valise* is fully opened.

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<sup>865</sup> Interview of Marcel Duchamp by James Johnson Sweeney, 1955. In Mario Kramer, *Die Große Schachtel: 'A One-Man Show in a Suitcase'*, trans. by Judith Rosenthal, (Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, n.d.), n.p.

<sup>866</sup> Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, p. 186.

<sup>867</sup> Francis M. Naumann, 'The Valise and Box in a Valise: A Brief History of Marcel Duchamp's Portable Museum,' in *de ou par MARCEL DUCHAMP ou RROSE SÉLAVY* (London: Gallery Entwistle & the Arts Council of Great Britain, London, May 22 - September 1, 1996), p. 25.

<sup>868</sup> Ibid.

<sup>869</sup> Roughly translated as "pull-outs," this is the name given by Duchamp to the grooved panels that slide out to each side of the central *Large Glass* when the *Boîte-en-Valise* is fully opened.



The left *tirette* initially reveals to the viewer a miniature copy of *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*. This panel then swings out again revealing two hinged panels, upon which are replicas of *The Bride* on one side of the hinge, and *King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes* on the other. Not only does this hinged *tirette* deal with the same period of work covered within the Cubo-Futurist gallery in Pasadena, these three paintings illustrate, in concentrated form, the same developmental narrative of the *Nude*'s ultimate transformation into *The Bride*. Moreover, this *tirette* is constructed such that, when the *Boîte* is opened, the hinged *tirette* must not be opened flat, but instead opened at an angle similar to the accordion-folded wall, in order to provide additional support and balance for the upright central panel. (figure 5.36d)

This was not the full extent of references to the *Boîte-en-Valise* evident in the exhibition. Many have noted the irony present in the use of Duchamp's rectified readymade *Wanted Poster*, mounted upon an olive green background, as the official poster for the exhibition.<sup>870</sup> (figure 5.38) What few have noted, though, is that despite the stridency of Duchamp's desire to acquire the original poster for the exhibition, the readymade could no longer be found. Thus, the *Wanted Poster* that was ultimately used was taken from the *Boîte-en-Valise*.<sup>871</sup>

The importance to Duchamp of the connection between this exhibition and the miniature one which preceded it was most prominently declared through his effective re-titling of the exhibition itself. The official title of the exhibition, according to the archives of the Norton Simon Museum, was *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition*. A different identification, however, is made on both the exhibition catalogue and poster. (figures 5.37 and 5.38) Both of these prominently bear the text "by or of Marcel Duchamp or Rrose Sélavy," in large red letters scrawled in Duchamp's handwriting. This text is a literal translation of the full title of the *Boîte-en-Valise: de ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rrose Sélavy*. To the casual observer, both the exhibition and its accompanying catalogue were re-titled by Duchamp, making the exhibition in Pasadena a literal translation into English of the *Boîte*.

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<sup>870</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 232.

<sup>871</sup> Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, p. 186.

The *Boîte* was not the only aggregation of Duchamp's work to have a direct influence on the appearance of the exhibition catalogue. One of the more striking aspects of this text is that the entries for the works of art were virtually all taken directly from the recently published English version of the *catalogue raisonné* by Robert Lebel, *Sur Marcel Duchamp*. Walter Hopps, motivated by a stringent exhibition budget,<sup>872</sup> took the pages from a copy of Lebel's manuscript, tore each entry out to form a roughly square card, and rearranged and re-numbered the entries to create a template for the exhibition catalogue.<sup>873</sup> When the existing entry was either incomplete or in need of updating, Hopps made the necessary "corrections" in pencil, over the top of the text by Lebel.<sup>874</sup> When an entry was needed for an item that did not appear in Lebel's text, Hopps created a new, handwritten card for that item. (figure 5.39)

It has been noted that Duchamp was pleased by the way that economic constraints were turned towards creative or subversive ends.<sup>875</sup> It has been suggested that Duchamp's pleasure with the resulting catalogue stemmed from the fact that its unorthodox composition effectively created a "readymade catalogue raisonné."<sup>876</sup> Moreover, it has been noted that this cut-and-paste method is suggestive of *bricolage*, and that these associations with open-ended improvisation would also have appealed to Duchamp.<sup>877</sup> While Duchamp surely appreciated these connections, the use of Lebel's *catalogue raisonné* to fill a catalogue apparently titled after the *Boîte-en-Valise* had the additional effect of coalescing the two, heretofore, most substantial efforts to unite and propagate Duchamp's oeuvre. Thus, not only is the Pasadena Art Museum's retrospective exhibition meant to be viewed as developing out of the *Boîte-en-Valise*, so too was the exhibition catalogue to be looked at in light of Duchamp's *catalogue raisonné*.

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<sup>872</sup> Tashjian, 'Nothing Left to Chance,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 67.

<sup>873</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 232.

<sup>874</sup> Tashjian, 'Nothing Left to Chance,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 67. Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 232.

<sup>875</sup> Tashjian, 'Nothing Left to Chance,' in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 67.

<sup>876</sup> Ibid.

<sup>877</sup> Ibid.

## The Press

Despite the significance of this exhibition, both to the development of an arts community within California, and the broader history of twentieth century art, the exhibition received only moderate press attention. Within national and international spheres, the exhibition was reviewed in the magazines *Artforum*,<sup>878</sup> and *Arts Magazine*,<sup>879</sup> and also received mention in *Art in America*.<sup>880</sup> The rote nature of the press coverage is perhaps best illustrated through an article by Richard Hamilton published in *Art International*.<sup>881</sup> This article contained nothing more than the text of the lecture Hamilton gave in association with the exhibition. No editorial or contextual information was provided, making the references to the exhibition mere givens within an article more clearly dedicated to the broader subject of Duchamp's life work than to the exhibition that occasioned the comments.

There was no mention whatsoever of the exhibition in the lay press outside of California, with the single exception of *The New York Times*.<sup>882</sup> This lone article dealt only tangentially with the retrospective exhibition itself, which would not open for another two months, and instead dealt predominantly with the public announcement of the exhibition. This announcement, made at a luncheon in Pasadena by the president of the Museum's board of trustees, Harold S. Jurgensen, was reported to *The New York Times* by a special correspondent. This was, however the full extent of *The Times*'s interest and they ultimately did not follow through with a review of the exhibition itself.

This lacklustre coverage by the national and international press is particularly odd when one considers that, six months prior to the opening of the exhibition, Walter Hopps wrote excitedly about the museum's anticipated media shower: "We seem to find ourselves with Sam Goldwyn's ex-P.R. man, who swears he can handle the American slicks for us."<sup>883</sup> Despite the credentials of the Pasadena Art Museum's

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<sup>878</sup> Paul Wescher, 'Marcel Duchamp,' *Artforum*, December 1963, p. 20.

<sup>879</sup> Rosalind G. Wholden, Title Unknown, *Arts Magazine*, January 1964, p. 64.

<sup>880</sup> Helen Wurdeman, 'In Pasadena – A Duchamp Retrospective,' *Art in America*, June 1963, p. 140, 142.

<sup>881</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Marcel Duchamp,' *Art International*, Christmas-New Year 1963-64, pp. 22-28.

<sup>882</sup> Schumach, 'Pasadena to see art of Duchamp,' p. 25.

<sup>883</sup> Letter from Walter Hopps to Richard Hamilton, 8 July 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California;

press department, the proudly philistine reputation of the west coast proved an insurmountable difficulty in generating a great deal of interest outside of the institution's immediate vicinity. Of the more than fifty newspaper clippings<sup>884</sup> within the exhibition records, all but one are from newspapers based in Los Angeles County or the neighbouring San Bernardino County.

As may be expected, the bulk of these articles are little more than announcements for the exhibition, taking their text almost directly from the press releases provided by the Pasadena Art Museum. There are, however, a substantial number of reviews from a wide array of local newspapers. The reviews of the exhibition are almost uniformly positive, with only the *Los Angeles Times* writer Arthur Millier weighing in with a sceptical assessment.<sup>885</sup> Fascinatingly, amongst the many positive reviews, certain of the reviewers were unusually willing to confess that they had no idea what to make of many of Duchamp's creations. Within an otherwise rhapsodic article, one reviewer stated frankly: "I do not understand Duchamp. ... [His works] pulsate with the most exquisite intelligence, but they are formidably irrational."<sup>886</sup> Similarly, the artist Frode Dann, writing for the *Pasadena Star-News* called Duchamp's *The*: "weird," dubbed the readymade *With Hidden Noise*: "a baffler," and described the *Large Glass* by saying "The design seems enigmatic and I must leave it to future analysts to unravel its merits."<sup>887</sup> Despite this avowed lack of comprehension, Mr. Dann, was largely laudatory, and closed with the insistence that "The Pasadena Art Museum should be justly proud of this display."<sup>888</sup>

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microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 57-58].

<sup>884</sup> These articles were all gathered for the museum by Allen's Press Clipping Bureau.

<sup>885</sup> Arthur Millier, 'Duchamp has his Day,' *Los Angeles Magazine*, date obscured [October 1963], n.p. Arthur Millier 'This Nude is an "Explosion",' *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, 20 October 1963, n.p. Copies of this article exist in Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4390, frames 1361-1364, 1375].

<sup>886</sup> Virginia Laddey, 'Duchamp Exhibition Mystifies, Intrigues,' *Long Beach Press-Telegram*, date obscured [1963], n.p. A copy of this article exists in Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4390, frame 1370].

<sup>887</sup> Frode N. Dann, 'Duchamp Remained Gadfly After the Nude Descended,' *Pasadena Star News*, date obscured [1963], n.p. A copy of this article exists in Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4390, frame 1371].

<sup>888</sup> Ibid.

A further effect of the entrenched philistinism and Hollywood credentials of Pasadena's press manager was the fact that the exhibition appeared in the news within the context of the society column as frequently as within the arts and culture sections. Every event associated with the exhibition, from the preview of the exhibition, to the Duchamps' arrival in California, to the luncheon held by Beatrice Wood, received press attention. These articles mention the exhibition itself only in passing, frequently dissolving into a litany of "who's who" in Los Angeles, and mention of those "cloud-hopping into Our Town"<sup>889</sup> from the east coast.

Despite this comparative lack of attention, *Marcel Duchamp: a Retrospective Exhibition* was a curatorial, if not critical, success. Not only was this Duchamp's first museum retrospective, it was also a turning point in the awareness of Duchamp's work by the broader public. Prior to the 1963 exhibition, appreciation of and excitement about Duchamp's art was effectively limited to those members of the art world who were already engaged in a dialogue with post-war art and aesthetics. Interestingly, even among a palpably growing body of Duchampian cognoscenti, few people had actually seen any more than photographs of his work prior to 1963. As Pasadena's "Duchampian expert" Richard Hamilton, admitted, "I boasted of knowing what he had done without ever having seen more than a few things in the flesh – justifying my claim by asserting the cerebral nature of his achievement."<sup>890</sup>

Hamilton was not alone in his admiration of Duchamp's work from afar, nor was he the only artist to find this opportunity of this exhibition to be enlightening. Virtually all of the burgeoning Californian *avant-garde* took advantage of this unprecedented opportunity to see Duchamp's legendary oeuvre first-hand. In addition to Hamilton, the attendees at the exhibition opening included the installation artists Edward Kienholz, and Robert Irwin, the sculptor and Larry Bell, (figure 5.40) and pop and abstract artists such as Paul Sarkesian, Ed Moses, and Ed Ruscha. (figure 5.41) Not a guest, but nonetheless a notable presence at the opening was the photographer Julian Wasser, who captured a jocular moment between a fresh-faced

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<sup>889</sup> Christy Fox, 'Society and Art Worlds Converge,' *Los Angeles Times*, date obscured [October 1963], n.p. A copy of this article exists in Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 281-282].

<sup>890</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Marcel Duchamp,' *Art International*, p. 22

Andy Warhol, in town for the opening of his first solo show at the Ferus Gallery, the sculptor Billy Al Bengston and the actor and art collector Dennis Hopper. (figure 5.42) These figures, all of whom shaped the *avant-garde* throughout the sixties and seventies, counted Duchamp high amongst their influences. Their presence at this monumental retrospective gave truth to the exhibition's claims of influence, and a palpable reality to these artists' own ascriptions of influence. This initial opportunity to see so many of Duchamp's works "in the flesh" not only altered the understanding of Duchamp's intellectual and artistic contribution amongst those already familiar with his work, but also introduced a wider public to his work.

“There is a fabulous or mythomaniac side to artists which one must beware of; they are great liars, in my view.”<sup>891</sup>

## The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp

### 6

Despite the relatively low level of press interest in the Pasadena exhibition outside of southern California, the success of this initial exhibition led to a rapid succession of ever larger exhibitions of Duchamp's work. Only fourteen months after the retrospective in Pasadena closed, New York saw the opening of the exhibition *Not Seen and/or Less Seen of/by Marcel Duchamp/Rose Sélavy 1904-1964* at the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery. Included in this exhibition were a total of one hundred and twenty-five items,<sup>892</sup> fourteen more than had been shown in Pasadena. *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* was not merely the largest exhibition Duchamp had yet received; it was and remains the most extensive exhibition of Duchamp's work ever held by a commercial gallery. In its turn, the Cordier & Ekstrom exhibition led directly to the largest exhibition of Duchamp's work held during his lifetime and one of the largest such exhibitions ever, *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*.

Conventional wisdom, following the dispositions of the Arensberg and Dreier collections, held that virtually all of Duchamp's significant work had either been housed in perpetuity within museums and similarly substantial collections or had become irretrievably lost. In defiance of this belief, Arne Ekstrom, the owner of the

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<sup>891</sup> Georges Charbonnier, interview of Marcel Duchamp, 7 October 1960. Originally broadcast on Radio-diffusion Télévision Française, 9 December 1960. The whole interview, broadcast over six segments, was published as Georges Charbonnier, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp* (Marseille: Andre Dimanche, 1994). Selections from the interview have been published in English in Gough-Cooper & Caumont, *Ephemerides on an About Marcel Duchamp*, n.p. [9 December 1960].

<sup>892</sup> List of Objects contained in the Cordier & Ekstrom/Mary Sisler exhibition. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders R-Z). The first 90 items were more traditional works of art of varying description, whereas the later 35 items were made up of miscellanea such as cover designs and ephemera.

Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery, took on the arduous task of gathering up virtually all of Duchamp's known remaining works.<sup>893</sup> Many of these were purchased from the family of Duchamp's childhood friend, Gustave Candel.<sup>894</sup> Likewise, many works were acquired from the widow of Duchamp's old friend and fellow WWI expatriate, Henri-Pierre Roché.<sup>895</sup> With these two collections, a full set of the recently completed Schwarz replicas,<sup>896</sup> works purchased from Duchamp's own family and works purchased from other sundry sources, Arne Ekstrom was able to put together a remarkably complete collection of items that covered Duchamp's career from 1904 to 1963.

Lacking as it did the signal artworks that made up the Dreier and Arensberg collections, *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* was not as broadly representative of Duchamp's career as the Pasadena retrospective had been. The contents of the show were predominantly from the very earliest part of Duchamp's career, with fifty of the ninety works dating from before Duchamp's explorations into cubism in 1911. So much early work was included in the exhibition that Duchamp jested the show be renamed "Teenage Work."<sup>897</sup> Despite this imbalance, there were nonetheless a number of significant later works included in the exhibition that had become more or less forgotten or overshadowed. Most notably included were, the *Rotary Demisphere (Precision Optics)* (figure 6.01) that Duchamp had made for Roché,<sup>898</sup> and the *Tzanck Check*, (figure 6.02) with which Duchamp had settled a bill for dental services. Likewise, the exhibition included the original of *L.H.O.O.Q.*, (figure 2.03) purchased

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<sup>893</sup> All of the works gathered by Arne Ekstrom and their whereabouts had been known at least as early as 1959, and had been included in Robert Lebel's catalogue of that year.

<sup>894</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 256. 18 of the 90 works listed in the catalogue of *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* were acquired from the Candel.

<sup>895</sup> Ibid. 12 works and 2 sketchbooks (listed in the catalogue as 21 separate items) were acquired from Mme. Roché.

<sup>896</sup> The Schwarz replicas were a set of sixteen readymades and other small sculptural objects, each produced in a series of eight signed and numbered replicas between 1962 and 1964. The full set included 1:1 scale replicas of *Bicycle Wheel*, *Three Standard Stoppages*, *Bottlerack*, *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, *Comb*, *With Hidden Noise*, *Traveller's Folding Item*, *Apolinère Enameled*, *Fountain*, *Trebuchet*, *Hat Rack*, *50ccof Paris Air*, *Fresh Widow*, *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?*, *Objet-dard* and *Wedge of Chastity*, and were made available for commercial sale through Arturo Schwarz's gallery in Milan.

<sup>897</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 435.

<sup>898</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 409, pp. 706-707.



from Duchamp himself,<sup>899</sup> as well as the original galvanized plaster object *Female Fig Leaf*, (figure 7.11a) purchased from its original recipient, Man Ray.<sup>900</sup>

As Ekstrom observed following the accumulation of this ample collection, “I do not know of anything that remains available... and I cannot get over a sense of amazement over what we have done.”<sup>901</sup> Thus, while it was not a traditional retrospective, *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* was still notable both for uniting these otherwise far-flung and forgotten works, and for shedding new light on Duchamp’s early artistic development. As Duchamp commented to one reviewer, “There’s a lot of early work in it brought over from Paris. That’s why the title – much of it hasn’t really been seen here before.”<sup>902</sup>

That this exhibition was the first time many of Duchamp’s early works were shown publicly was, however, not its most salient feature. What made *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* particularly notable in many contemporary accounts was the fact that its contents were purchased, lock, stock and barrel, by Mrs. Mary Sisler. The widow of William Sisler, son of one of the founders of the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company, Mrs. Sisler had begun to collect modern art soon after her husband’s death in the early 1960s.<sup>903</sup> She had authorized Arne Ekstrom to assemble this collection on her behalf, taking possession of it herself at the close of the exhibition.<sup>904</sup> With the purchase of this ready-made collection Mrs. Sisler became the owner of the largest, if not the most significant, private collection of Duchamp’s work.<sup>905</sup>

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<sup>899</sup> Ibid., no. 369, pp. 670-671.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid., no. 536, p. 797.

<sup>901</sup> Letter from Arne Ekstrom to Mary Sisler, 22 July 1964. Mary and William Sisler Papers, [Sisler II.11]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

<sup>902</sup> Glueck, ‘Duchamp Opens Display Today,’ p. 45.

<sup>903</sup> Grace Glueck, ‘To Lend or Not To Lend,’ *The New York Times*, 24 Jan 1965, section X, p. 22. Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 256.

<sup>904</sup> In the legal dispute regarding payment it was attested that “Mrs. Sisler took final possession in February 1965 of the entire collection...” Letter from Morris A. Wirth to Jesse K. Robinson, 1 Nov 1965. Mary and William Sisler Papers, [Sisler II.5]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

<sup>905</sup> At the time of their deaths, the Arensbergs’ collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art contained 47 items by Duchamp. According to the exhibition catalogue, Mary Sisler’s collection contained 90 items. Of these, 21 were pages from an early sketchbook. Even if this item were considered as a single object, the Sisler collection would still contain approximately 23 more items than that of the Arensbergs.

In assembling this collection, Marcel Duchamp and Arne Ekstrom were operating on the understanding that it would eventually be donated to a museum.<sup>906</sup> This assumption would prove mistaken, as it soon became apparent that Mrs. Sisler's motives were far from altruistic. Rather, what Mrs. Sisler desired was the attention and accolades that accompanied having her name associated with a major catalogue and collection.<sup>907</sup> So base were her motives that she insisted upon the destruction of the first run of the exhibition catalogue for *Not Seen and/or Less Seen*, the cover of which bore Duchamp's signature, and demanded that the cover be reprinted with her own name in place of Duchamp's.<sup>908</sup> (figure 6.03) Following the close of the exhibition Mrs. Sisler even attempted to return the works to the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery and refused to pay the balance owed; an amount in excess of \$75,000.<sup>909</sup> Unsuccessful, she spent the next few decades shopping the collection around the world. Unable to sell the whole collection, she sold several works at a substantial profit, and donated others to museums with substantial tax write-offs.<sup>910</sup>

By all accounts, Mrs. Sisler had no real understanding of the conceptual underpinnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century art that comprised her collection, nor was she even particularly interested in it; by her own admission she preferred the early impressionist influenced works by Duchamp to any of his later works.<sup>911</sup> Her collection was, rather, entirely shaped by the advice of her son, David Hayes. Unlike his mother, David Hayes was extremely knowledgeable regarding modern art. Hayes had studied Art History at Yale University, and had gone on to become a curator at the Guggenheim Museum and a founding board member of the Foundation for Contemporary Arts.<sup>912</sup> While at Yale, Hayes had developed a keen interest in

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<sup>906</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 436. Glueck, 'To Lend or Not To Lend,' p. 22.

<sup>907</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 436. This sentiment was confirmed by Nicholas Ekstrom, son of Arne Ekstrom, in a telephone call with the author, November 2008.

<sup>908</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, pp. 256-257.

<sup>909</sup> Letter from Morris A. Wirth to Jesse K. Robinson, 1 November 1965. Mary and William Sisler Papers, [Sisler II.11]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. This was also confirmed by Nicholas Ekstrom, November 2008. \$75,000.00 in 1964 would have the approximate buying power of \$522,505.65 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

<sup>910</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 436.

<sup>911</sup> Ibid., p. 435. Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 256 (p. 284, note 2). Naumann, who wrote the catalogue introduction for that portion of the William and Mary Sisler collection that was later donated to the Museum of Modern Art, has recounted that Mrs. Sisler confessed to him that "of all the works by Duchamp that she owned, her favorites were the artist's early impressionist paintings."

<sup>912</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 233. Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 435. The Foundation for Contemporary Arts website <<http://www.foundationforcontemporaryarts.org/about/history.html>> [accessed 20 October 2009].

Duchamp's work, and it was at his behest that the works for *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* were assembled for purchase by his mother.

Hayes's interest in Duchamp's work had led him to participate in the earlier Pasadena retrospective as an unofficial expert on Duchamp. In this capacity, Hayes undertook the job of creating for Pasadena the replicas of those essential works that could not be borrowed. His replicas of *Nine Malic Moulds*, (figure 5.06) *Three Standard Stoppages*, (figure 5.08) and the collage *In the Manner of Delvaux* (figure 5.09) constituted much of Pasadena's contribution to the exhibition.<sup>913</sup>

David Hayes was not the only participant in the Pasadena exhibition to be involved in this second retrospective exhibition: Richard Hamilton, reprising his role as "international authority on Duchamp's work,"<sup>914</sup> had been commissioned to write the introduction and text for the *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* exhibition catalogue. As has been discussed, Hamilton's role in the Pasadena exhibition was instrumental in underscoring the claims that Duchamp was a beacon to the artists of the contemporary *avant-garde*. The role Hamilton performed for the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery was nearly identical. Having a prominent member of the *avant-garde* provide an authoritative text on Duchamp demonstrated a connection with and knowledge of Duchamp's theories that went beyond mere admiration of a predecessor. As an active artist and the acknowledged founder of pop art, Richard Hamilton served as living proof that "[Duchamp's] work struck the sparks that set others afire."<sup>915</sup>

It was Hamilton's reprise of this role for the Cordier & Ekstrom gallery that was in large part responsible for the swift appearance of the next and still more extensive exhibition of Duchamp's work. Even in his lecture at the Pasadena exhibition in 1963, in the face of this groundbreaking retrospective Hamilton mused that "the dream of assembling [Duchamp's] entire output some day is irresistible."<sup>916</sup> With the advent of the Sisler collection, Hamilton's dream swiftly began to look

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<sup>913</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 231, 256.

<sup>914</sup> 'News Release: The Pasadena Art Museum,' marked 'For Immediate Release,' [August 1963]. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frame 38].

<sup>915</sup> Anon., 'Pop's Dada,' p. 85.

<sup>916</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Marcel Duchamp,' *Art International*, p. 22.

possible. Following the close of the exhibition at the Cordier & Ekstrom gallery on 14 February 1964, Mrs. Sisler's collection was to travel continuously throughout the remainder of the year. This tour of cities was to include the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, the Baltimore Museum of Art, Brandeis University, the Milwaukee Art Center and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.<sup>917</sup> Hamilton hoped to add to that list an exhibition in Great Britain.

To this end, Richard Hamilton spoke with his friend and associate Roland Penrose, the founder of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London and a trustee of the Tate Gallery. These talks were soon expanded to include the newly appointed Director of the Tate Gallery, Norman Reid, and Gabriel White, the Director of Art at the Visual Arts Department of the Arts Council of Great Britain. Despite a measure of uncertainty regarding the specifics of the task they were undertaking, the discussions were nonetheless met with considerable excitement and approval on all sides. Occurring as they did, prior even to the opening of *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* in New York,<sup>918</sup> the plans for Mrs. Sisler's collection had yet to be finalized. Some fairly grandiose plans were still being thrown about, including the possibility of showing the Sisler collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art alongside the Arensberg collection. At the very least, there was agreement on the goal of bringing to the United Kingdom as much of the contents of *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* as possible, with the desired addition of still more work.<sup>919</sup>

Even in its initially nebulous state, the prospect of an exhibition of work by Marcel Duchamp was positively received. The Arts Council of Great Britain, under whose auspices the exhibition would be organized and funded, swiftly reserved a £3,000 budgetary surplus to cover the exhibition.<sup>920</sup> With funding secured, the

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<sup>917</sup> List of dates and locations to which the Mary Sisler collection travelled (possibly appended to a letter from Mary Sisler to Miss. Jennifer Gough-Cooper, 14 Sept. 1976). Mary and William Sisler Papers, [Sisler II.4]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

<sup>918</sup> The earliest memorandum dates to 23 Nov 1964, approximately six weeks prior to the opening of *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* at the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery. ACGB Minute from RC to Gabriel White, 23 Nov [1964]. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b})

<sup>919</sup> ACGB Minute from RC to Gabriel White, 23 Nov [1964]. Memo from Gabriel White to Mr. McRobert, 30 Dec 1964. Letter from Gabriel White to Norman Reid, 4 Feb 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b})

<sup>920</sup> Memorandum from Gabriel White to Mr. McRoberts, 30 Dec 1964. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}). According to the Bank of England Inflation Calculator, £3,000.00 in 1964

exhibition proposal was brought before the trustees of the Tate Gallery, at whose institution the exhibition would be held. The Tate Gallery trustees also readily approved the prospect of a Duchamp exhibition. Their sole caveat was that Philadelphia must lend generously, “as without their strong support it could hardly be a fully representative show.”<sup>921</sup>

Even without overt aspirations towards a full-dress retrospective, Richard Hamilton was already finding himself up against the same obstacles that had been encountered so recently by Pasadena. So desirous was the Tate Gallery of the opportunity to host this exhibition, however, that Norman Reid contacted Dr. Evan Turner, the new director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, to request their cooperation.<sup>922</sup> This gesture was significant as all other loan requests were handled entirely by either Richard Hamilton or Gabriel White of the Arts Council, who were jointly responsible for the organization of the exhibition. Such a gesture by the director of the Tate Gallery was not only indicative of the institution’s desire to host this exhibition, but also a tacit acknowledgement of the difficulties that the Arts Council would likely face in broaching such negotiations on their own.

As has been discussed, securing the necessary loans from Philadelphia was among the first and largest difficulties faced by Walter Hopps planning the retrospective in Pasadena. In order to secure the necessary loans Hopps had offered Philadelphia the unconditional loan of Pasadena’s entire collection of works by Paul Klee. Even with the offer of an exchange, Hopps did not feel sufficiently confident to request all of the desired works by Duchamp in his initial request and ultimately approached the trustees of Philadelphia a total of three times before all of the necessary loans were secured.

Unlike the Pasadena Museum of Art, the Arts Council of Great Britain was not a museum but a governmentally funded, non-departmental body whose remit was to promote the fine arts in Britain. Without assistance from the Tate Gallery, the Arts

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would have the approximate buying power of £43,535.95 today.

<<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/inflation/calculator/flash/index.htm>>.

<sup>921</sup> Letter from Norman Reid to Gabriel White, 25 February 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>922</sup> Letter from Gabriel White to Marcel Duchamp, 26 May 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

Council alone was not capable of offering an exchange of loans as Pasadena had done. The Tate Gallery, on the other hand, was not similarly encumbered. Housing the national collection of British Art as well as the British collection of international modern art, the Tate Gallery was well positioned for such negotiations. As such, it was Norman Reid of the Tate Gallery rather than Richard Hamilton or Gabriel White who broached the loan request with Philadelphia. While it is unclear what, if any, specific reciprocal promises were made by the Tate Gallery, the Tate certainly possessed the collection and clout necessary for success.<sup>923</sup> Only two months after the exhibition had been approved by the Tate Gallery, and without any specific requests, Norman Reid was able to deliver to the Art Council a promise of “full co-operation” from the Philadelphia Museum of Art.<sup>924</sup>

Concurrent with these efforts to secure loans from Philadelphia, Richard Hamilton and the Arts Council were also engaged in securing the loan of the collection that had inspired the exhibition itself, that now owned by Mary Sisler. Initial discussions had occurred with Arne Ekstrom, prior to the opening of *Not Seen and/or Less Seen*.<sup>925</sup> These plans, however, would still need to be confirmed by Mary Sisler once she took possession of the works. Marcel Duchamp had extracted a promise of cooperation from Mrs. Sisler during the opening of her collection at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston.<sup>926</sup> Aware of Mrs. Sisler’s taste for flattery and adulation, Duchamp also advised the organizers to contact her directly, offering praise for her new collection:

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<sup>923</sup> Unlike the reciprocity between Philadelphia and Pasadena, the arrangements between the Tate Gallery and Philadelphia were of a more implicit and ongoing character. Indicative of this relationship is the decision by Philadelphia to ship to London, in amongst the works of art by Duchamp, a painting by Turner that was in need of repair. Letter from W. R. Keating & Co., inc. (insurers) to Mr. A. C. Taylor, 3 May 1966. Letter from Gertrude Toomey to Hugh Shaw, 5 May 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders P-Q).

<sup>924</sup> Letter from Gabriel White to Marcel Duchamp, 26 May 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>925</sup> ACGB Minute from RC to Gabriel White, 23 Nov [1964]. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>926</sup> Letter from Gabriel White to Marcel Duchamp, 26 May 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

Marcel has spoken to me about her [Mary Sisler]

butter her up. essential collection

biggest retrospective ever held

completeness due to her\* [sic]<sup>927</sup>

Not wanting to leave Mrs. Sisler's participation to chance, Duchamp further underscored the barrage of requests by sending yet another letter himself reiterating the entreaties for her cooperation.<sup>928</sup>

Sweet-talking private lenders was not the extent of Duchamp's participation in the planning and organization of this exhibition. As we shall shortly see, Duchamp had a hand in all of the major decisions regarding *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*. To varying degrees, Marcel Duchamp had been involved as far back as the accumulation of works for the *Not Seen and/or Less Seen* exhibition. The original of *L.H.O.O.Q.* included in the collection was acquired from Duchamp's personal collection. Similarly, as Duchamp was fond of relating, the original of *Tzanck Check* had been acquired from its original owner by Duchamp himself, "for a lot more than it says its worth!"<sup>929</sup> Several other works included in the exhibition were not acquired directly from Duchamp, but could only have been acquired by Arne Ekstrom with Duchamp's knowledge, if not his explicit involvement. A few of the paintings, including *Young Man and Girl in Spring*, (figure 6.04) and *Seated Nude*, (figure 6.05) were purchased from Duchamp's sister Suzanne. Similarly, the original of *Female Fig Leaf*, was bought directly from Man Ray. It is difficult to imagine any of these acquisitions occurring without Duchamp's knowledge and approval.

Though rarely explicit, Duchamp's involvement was continuous throughout *Not Seen and/or Less Seen*. In addition to the gathering of works, Duchamp was also involved in the creation of the catalogue for the exhibition. Richard Hamilton spent an entire month with Duchamp "preparing the catalogue and consulting with Marcel all the way to get a maximum of detail and precision."<sup>930</sup> Moreover, it was by virtue of Duchamp's recommendation that the print run for the exhibition's catalogue was

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<sup>927</sup> Untitled scratch page, dated 24 May [1965]. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>928</sup> Letter from Gabriel White to Richard Hamilton, 29 June 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>929</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 63.

<sup>930</sup> Letter from Arne Ekstrom to Mary Sisler, 22 July 1964. Mary and William Sisler Papers, [Sisler II.11]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

increased from Arne Ekstrom's initial proposal of 2,500 copies to 3,000.<sup>931</sup> The most telling aspect of Duchamp's involvement, however, is that he attended the opening of this exhibition at nearly all of the five American stops on its tour.

Duchamp had, over the course of his life, developed a measure of notoriety for disdaining exhibition openings. He had neglected to attend his own first one man show at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1937.<sup>932</sup> Likewise, much has been made of his decision, after organizing and designing the 1938 Surrealist Exhibition in Paris, to take a flight to New York the night before the exhibition opened.<sup>933</sup> Duchamp's own explanation for such avoidance was the frank declaration that "I have a horror of openings. Exhibitions are frightful...."<sup>934</sup> These statements, made in 1967 – one year after the Tate Gallery exhibition and two years after the opening of *Not Seen and/or Less Seen*, – indicate the interest he took in the publicity surrounding this final private collection. Attending these openings entailed travelling approximately once every other month to such far-flung locales as Texas, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Duchamp did not merely play the convivial guest of honour at these openings, on at least one occasion he acquiesced to an onstage, recorded interview and a similarly recorded round-table interview over the press luncheon.<sup>935</sup>

In light of Duchamp's involvement in the development of *Not Seen and/or Less Seen*, it can be safely assumed that Duchamp was at least aware of the plans for the Tate Gallery exhibition from the earliest stages. Working together on the production of the catalogue for *Not Seen and/or Less Seen*, Duchamp and Hamilton would have been in contact as the prospect of an exhibition in London began to take shape.<sup>936</sup> Thus, while formal approval of the exhibition by Duchamp was not

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<sup>931</sup> Ibid.

<sup>932</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 80.

<sup>933</sup> Ibid., p.82.

<sup>934</sup> Ibid.

<sup>935</sup> This was at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Recordings of the two events, in real audio format (.rm), are accessible through the Walker Art Center website  
<<http://collections.walkerart.org/item/archive/18>> &  
<<http://collections.walkerart.org/item/archive/17>>.

<sup>936</sup> I attempted to make contact with Richard Hamilton in order to confirm this, as well as other details regarding the exhibition *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, and the replica of the *Large Glass* Hamilton created for the exhibition (about which, more will be said later). Unfortunately, my attempts have so far been unsuccessful. I do intend to continue my efforts to make contact with Richard Hamilton and resolve these points.



received until June of 1965,<sup>937</sup> evidence of his consent, and even support for the project, can be traced back considerably further.

Having secured nearly unreserved loans both from Mary Sisler and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as well as the support and assistance of Duchamp himself, the exhibition began to take shape. The possibilities that now lay open to Hamilton and White were beyond either's wildest hopes. All of the earliest speculation had centred on bringing over a more or less preassembled exhibition. In some incarnations this was to occur as an additional stop on the tour of *Not Seen and/or Less Seen*, or as an amalgamation of the Sisler and Arensberg collections that would first be shown in Philadelphia and then in the United Kingdom.<sup>938</sup> In the course of these early speculations questions had been raised about the possible cooperation of MoMA or Yale, but these were considered only as additions to a pre-formed exhibition.<sup>939</sup> The extensive promises of cooperation, however, opened up the very real possibility of hosting an even larger and more comprehensive exhibition than had yet been seen either in Pasadena or New York.

Writing to Marcel Duchamp in May of 1965, Gabriel White confirmed that he and Richard Hamilton had been reliably, if only verbally, assured of complete cooperation from all of the major lenders. With this assurance, he described their revised goal as the creation of a "large and important retrospective exhibition of your work."<sup>940</sup> This was the first time that the Tate exhibition had been described as having the expanded scope implied by the descriptor *retrospective*. The prospect of creating a "large and important retrospective," effectively from scratch and so soon after the exhibition in Pasadena, must have initially appeared unlikely. However, the art world could hardly have been described as having been saturated with Duchamp in light of the relative cultural isolation of southern California. Thus, the confluence of institutional good will and the fact that Duchamp's work had rarely been exhibited in

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<sup>937</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Gabriel White, 6 June 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>938</sup> This understanding is recurrent throughout the early notes, but is best outlined in a letter from Gabriel White to Norman Reid, 4 February 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>939</sup> Marginal notes in a memo from Gabriel White to Mr. McRobert, 30 December 1964 & Untitled scratch page, dated 24 May [1965]. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>940</sup> Letter from Gabriel White to Marcel Duchamp, 26 May 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

Great Britain<sup>941</sup> suddenly made the possibility of a second retrospective not only possible but tantalizingly attainable.

Duchamp appears to have heartily approved of the expanded scope of the exhibition. His written response to Gabriel White offered polite and measured agreement that, with the cooperation thus far promised, “the show will be a very complete and nice one.”<sup>942</sup> This apparently restrained approval was soon belied by the arrival of letters from Dott. Palma Bucarelli, the director of the Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea and François Mathey, the chief curator of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.<sup>943</sup> Each letter expressed the fervent desire of the head of his or her institution to host the “*grande mostra*”, or “*importante rétrospective*” following its close at the Tate Gallery. Both letters, moreover, begin by informing the recipient that Marcel Duchamp had recently met with Bucarelli or Mathey during his recent trip to Rome and Paris respectively. In both cases, it is through Duchamp that the institutions had become aware of the upcoming exhibition at the Tate. François Mathey of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs went even further, emphasizing that it was Duchamp’s as well as his own – *partagé* – desire that the exhibition should travel to Paris.<sup>944</sup>

These letters are particularly interesting for the insight they provide into Duchamp’s aspirations for the exhibition. From them we can safely assume that Duchamp not only wholeheartedly approved of the scope of the Tate exhibition being expanded to a large and important retrospective exhibition, but also wished for a similar expansion of locale. Duchamp’s desire to have the exhibition tour additional European cities, especially Paris, was sufficiently great that he spent his annual trip to

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<sup>941</sup> Duchamp’s *Sad Young Man on a Train*, had been shown by the Arts Council of Great Britain, as recently as March 1965 in an exhibition of works owned by Peggy Guggenheim. Other exhibitions including replicas and photographs of Duchamp’s work had been shown in London in September of 1959, and September of 1964. Prior to that, however, no original work by Duchamp had been exhibited in Great Britain since 1952 (*L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle, Peintures, Sculptures*, assembled by Musée Nationale d’Art Moderne, Paris).

<sup>942</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Gabriel White, 6 June 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>943</sup> Letter from Dott. Palma Bucarelli to Norman Reid, 27 August 1965. Letter from François Mathey to Gabriel White, 15 October 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>944</sup> “*J’ai rencontré récemment à Paris Marcel Duchamp qui m’a fait part de votre intention d’organiser en 1966 une importante rétrospective de son oeuvre à la Tate et, en même temps, il m’a exprimé le désir –partagé – de la voir également accueillir [sic] à Paris.*” Letter from François Mathey to Gabriel White, 15 October 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

Europe promoting it personally. The fact that the first of the letters arrived just three months after the plans for this exhibition were first described as “large” and “retrospective” further indicates the vigorousness with which Duchamp pursued the possibility of a full European tour.

In addition to providing a telling glimpse behind Duchamp’s characteristically dispassionate veneer, these letters also inevitably raised the desire, at least on the part of Evan Turner: “to know what exactly Marcel Duchamp seems to be proposing as he moves from one European capital to the next.”<sup>945</sup> For, as both Turner’s query and Gabriel White’s response indicate, Duchamp had not informed either the Arts Council of Great Britain or Philadelphia of his desire that the exhibition travel. There had been, in Britain, early speculation about museums which might wish to host the exhibition after the Tate,<sup>946</sup> though only in the most vague of terms. Duchamp had also expressed to both White and Hamilton his desire that the exhibition should travel to Paris,<sup>947</sup> though he had apparently not shared his intention to personally pursue this goal.

One of the reasons that Duchamp’s pursuit of other institutions to host this exhibition raised concern, at least with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, was requirement that nothing from the Arensberg collection be away from the museum for more than four months.<sup>948</sup> Duchamp’s involvement in negotiating the deed of gift on behalf of the Arensbergs leaves no doubt as to whether he was aware of the condition. And, as the limitations imposed by this condition had arisen during the planning of the retrospective in Pasadena only two years before, it is further unlikely that Duchamp had forgotten this.<sup>949</sup> Rather, the surreptitiousness of Duchamp’s plans

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<sup>945</sup> Letter from Evan Turner to Gabriel White, 14 October 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders P-Q).

<sup>946</sup> Memo from Gabriel White to Mr. McRobert, 30 December 1964. Untitled, undated scratch sheet with notes [late 1964/early 1965]. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b})

<sup>947</sup> Letter from Gabriel White to Dott. Bucarelli, 8 September 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>948</sup> Letter from Evan Turner to Gabriel White, 14 October 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders P-Q). Memorandum of Agreement between the Francis Bacon Foundation, Incorporated and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, signed 27 December 1950. Box 180, Folder 5, Fiske Kimball Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>949</sup> Letter from Henri Marceau to Thomas W. Leavitt, 17 January 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4389, frames 367-368].

seems to have been motivated by the hope that a groundswell of interest and support might encourage the trustees of the Philadelphia Museum of Art to take a broader view of the Arensbergs' wishes. Unfortunately for Duchamp, such was not to be the case. Philadelphia stuck firmly to the conditions laid down in the Arensbergs' deed of gift; leaving the Tate as the only institution to host this large and important European retrospective.

Another factor that made Duchamp's pursuit of additional European museums somewhat audacious was that the board of directors of the Philadelphia Museum of Art had yet to officially approve any loans, even to the Tate gallery. The museum's director, Evan Turner, had provided Gabriel White with written assurance of cooperation that was every bit as extensive as that which had been promised to Norman Reid, the director of the Tate.<sup>950</sup> The previous director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Henri Gabriel Marceau, had declined to lend extensively to the exhibition in Pasadena, insisting on the need to "give our visiting public during the summer some contact with the Duchamp works in our collection."<sup>951</sup> The Philadelphia Museum of Art's new director Evan Turner, however, was of a more munificent inclination, explaining to Gabriel White that "we have a considerable responsibility to the reputation of Mr. Duchamp to cooperate, if nothing else."<sup>952</sup>

So seriously did Turner and the current board of the Philadelphia Museum of Art take their responsibility to Duchamp's reputation that, despite their refusal to allow the works to travel to other museums, only six works by Duchamp were withheld from loan to the Tate.<sup>953</sup> The museum's list of works which were excluded from loan naturally included the two works on glass, the *Large Glass* (figure 3.12) and the *Glider Containing Water Mill in Neighbouring Metals*. (figure 3.18) In addition, two of Duchamp's more traditional paintings on canvas, the *King and Queen*

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<sup>950</sup> Letter from Evan Turner to Gabriel White, 21 June 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders P-Q).

<sup>951</sup> Letter from Henri Marceau to Thomas W. Leavitt, 5 June 1963. Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition records, 1959-1963. Owned by the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena California; microfilmed by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. [Microfilm reel 4388, frames 355-356].

<sup>952</sup> Letter from Evan Turner to Gabriel White, 21 June 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders P-Q).

<sup>953</sup> Letter from Evan Turner to Gabriel White, 10 February 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders P-Q).

*Surrounded by Swift Nudes* (figure 1.05) and *Chocolate Grinder, No. 2*, (figure 6.06) were determined to be too fragile to safely be loaned. Finally, *Why Not Sneeze, Rose Sélavy?* (figure 2.05) and *50cc of Paris Air*, (figure 3.15) the two most fragile of the original readymades, were withheld on the grounds that they “have both been amply reproduced.”<sup>954</sup> Beyond the refusal to lend these six works, the only caveats that Philadelphia placed upon their cooperation was that their loan should be sent in two shipments, rather than one, and that a representative of the museum must accompany the loan in transit.<sup>955</sup>

This must have been thoroughly heartening news to Hamilton and White, for, anticipating that the works on glass would not be loaned, they had already planned to have these two works replicated.<sup>956</sup> Likewise, Mrs. Sisler’s collection included replicas of the two withheld readymades. Thus, the only items within the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s collection that would not be represented in the Tate retrospective were the paintings *King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes* and *Chocolate Grinder, No. 2*. Even without any of these six objects Philadelphia’s contribution was nonetheless substantial, ultimately totalling thirty-four works, five more items than they had loaned to Pasadena.

The generosity of the Philadelphia Museum of Art was matched by other institutions holding Duchamp’s significant works. The Museum of Modern Art lent their *Passage from Virgin to Bride*. (figure 3.22) Likewise, the painting *Tu m’*, (figure 3.13) which had been deemed too fragile to travel to Pasadena in 1963, had since been restored and Yale was willing to lend it to the Tate Gallery. The comparative ease with which the Tate Gallery and the Arts Council of Great Britain were able to obtain loans was in part due to the success of Duchamp’s earlier retrospective in Pasadena. Not only had a precedent been established regarding which works could and could not be lent, easing the process of requesting works, but the success of the Pasadena retrospective further boosted the already meteoric rise in the profile of both Duchamp and his work. Having shown that exhibitions of

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<sup>954</sup> Ibid.

<sup>955</sup> Ibid.

<sup>956</sup> The earliest mention of replicating both the “*large glass*” and the “*semi-circle glass*” is in the marginal scribbling of a memo from Gabriel White to Mr. McRobert, 30 December 1964. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}). More will be said later in this chapter about the role of replicas in the Tate retrospective.

Duchamp's work generated a more than merely academic interest, there was an increased incentive for institutions to cooperate with, and thus align themselves with, the cultural significance promoted by the large, important retrospective exhibition.

As such, there was less need for Duchamp's assistance in securing institutional loans for the exhibition at the Tate Gallery than there had been for the Pasadena exhibition three years earlier. Hamilton and White did, however, make use of Duchamp's influence and connections in selecting and contacting private lenders. Though the majority of private lenders for the Tate exhibition had lent their works to the retrospective in Pasadena, there were a few possessors of important works by Duchamp who had been neglected in the earlier retrospective. It is with regard to these lenders that Duchamp's assistance in the formation of the exhibition was particularly prominent.

One individual whose contribution to the Tate gallery retrospective came at Duchamp's own request was that of Arturo Schwarz.<sup>957</sup> A devotee of Duchamp's since their initial meeting in 1957, Schwarz had begun to work on a definitive *catalogue raisonné* of Duchamp's work soon after their first meeting.<sup>958</sup> He had also begun to aggressively collect works by Duchamp, garnering a reputation as being "ready to pay anything for Duchamp works."<sup>959</sup>

The initial loan request letter from the Arts Council of Great Britain to Schwarz stated that "Monsieur Duchamp would particularly like to include [study for] Tzanck cheque and Waistcoat...."<sup>960</sup> (figure 6.07) What Schwarz ended up loaning, however, was far more extensive, making his the second largest private loan to the

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<sup>957</sup> The letter from the Arts Council to Arturo Schwarz requesting works for loan was the only one in which the request was framed "Monsieur Duchamp would particularly like to include...". ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders H-M). All of the other request letters describe the desire for inclusion as stemming from Richard Hamilton.

<sup>958</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, pp. 425-426. Schwarz liked to assert that their meeting was precipitated by a vivid dream Schwarz had one night. In this dream, Duchamp found some lost drawings that had fallen behind a desk drawer. Schwarz wrote to Duchamp, whom he had never met before, describing this dream, and Duchamp responded saying that he had found a lost folder of drawings exactly where Schwarz had described. Teeny has consistently contradicted this story, claiming that Schwarz simply came to see them one day in New York.

<sup>959</sup> Letter from Arne Ekstrom to Mary Sisler, 22 July 1964. Mary and William Sisler Papers, [Sisler II.11]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

<sup>960</sup> Letter from Gabriel White to Arturo Schwarz, 4 March 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders H-M). Mr. White's underlining.

exhibition after Mary Sisler. His loan included eight items, predominantly multiples and examples of collage. He also lent the original of Duchamp's collage, *In the Manner of Delvaux*, (figure 6.08) which had been recreated for the Pasadena exhibition since the organizers had been unable to locate it.<sup>961</sup> In addition to the artworks, Schwarz also loaned twenty-one original publications on and by Duchamp to the retrospective's display of documentary material.

In addition to his generous loans, Schwarz's other significant contribution was towards the exhibition catalogue. As part of the research for the monograph and *catalogue raisonné* he was preparing, Schwarz had produced "a descriptive bibliography of Marcel Duchamp's writings, lectures, translations and interviews."<sup>962</sup> This, as yet unfinished, document was being prepared as an appendix to Schwarz's forthcoming work, and Schwarz offered Gabriel White the opportunity to publish the document as an appendix to the Tate's exhibition catalogue.<sup>963</sup> The inclusion of an indexed, descriptive bibliography complemented Hamilton and White's growing desire to make this exhibition, and its catalogue, as complete as possible. Schwarz's addition endowed the catalogue with an academic rigor that helped to raise it above the traditional role as a souvenir, enabling it to stand as a monograph in its own right.

Duchamp's assistance was similarly employed in securing private loans from individuals with whom he had a more longstanding association, especially those who had proved difficult to locate or unwilling to lend to previous exhibitions. One such individual was Robert Lebel, Duchamp's long time friend and the author of the first monograph on the artist and, until 1968, the only *catalogue raisonné* of Duchamp's work. Lebel possessed three of Duchamp's late sculptural works, *With My Tongue in My Cheek*, (figure 6.09) *Torture-Morte*, (figure 6.10) and *Sculpture-Morte*, (figure 6.11) which had all been created after the printing of the first edition of Lebel's catalogue. Only the first of these three works had ever been publicly displayed, but it

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<sup>961</sup> David Hayes's copy of *In the Manner of Delvaux* was the only replica created for exhibition at Pasadena that Duchamp declined to "authorize" with the legend "*pour copie conforme*" due to its comparative lack of quality. Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 233.

<sup>962</sup> Arturo Schwarz, 'Elements of a descriptive bibliography of Marcel Duchamp's writings, lectures, translations and interviews,' *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. by Gabriel White and Richard Hamilton (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1966), pp. 92-110.

<sup>963</sup> Letter from Arturo Schwarz to Gabriel White, 10 March 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders H-M).

had been so poorly cared for, and all three were so fragile that Lebel refused to loan any of them to the exhibition when initially contacted by Gabriel White. As explanation, he insisted that “no financial indemnity could ever compensate for the loss or damage of an original work by such a rare artist as Duchamp.”<sup>964</sup>

Richard Hamilton was extremely anxious to show these rarely seen objects, and asked Duchamp “to put in a word on our behalf with Lebel,” insisting that “if we impress upon Lebel our desire to make this a really comprehensive show, the nearest thing to ‘the complete works of Marcel Duchamp’ as possible, he should be as anxious as us to make it that.”<sup>965</sup> Much as Hamilton had predicted, Lebel did relent and consented to the loan of *With my Tongue in My Cheek*, accepting the Arts Council’s suggestion that Lebel personally transport the work to and from the exhibition at the Council’s expense.<sup>966</sup> Lebel steadfastly persisted in his refusal to lend the other two works, insisting that they were far too fragile.

As a concession, Lebel offered Hamilton and White the opportunity to borrow the pen and ink drawing *Cols Alités*, a 1959 drawing of the *Large Glass* that had been “completed” through the addition of an electrical pylon and setting the whole ensemble before a faint background of rolling hills.<sup>967</sup> (figure 6.12) The simultaneity of the *Large Glass* imagery with electrical implements and the distant landscape has led to *Cols Alités* being identified, in retrospect, as a “tantalizing link between the *Large Glass* and the *Étant Donnés*”<sup>968</sup> At the very least, to the viewer with the benefit of hindsight, the work appears to be one of the most overt hints within Duchamp’s artistic output that he was not yet through with the themes involved in his “definitively unfinished” masterpiece.

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<sup>964</sup> Letter from Robert Lebel to Gabriel White, 13 December 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders H-M).

<sup>965</sup> Letter from Richard Hamilton to Miss. Quihampton (Gabriel White’s secretary), 3 January 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>966</sup> Letter from Robert Lebel to Gabriel White, 8 April 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders H-M).

<sup>967</sup> Letter from Robert Lebel to Gabriel White, 13 December 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders H-M).

<sup>968</sup> D’Harnoncourt and Hopps, *Étant Donnés*, p. 26. Helmut Wohl, ‘Beyond the Large Glass: Notes on a Landscape Drawing by Marcel Duchamp,’ *The Burlington Magazine*, November 1977, pp. 763-772.



It is unclear if Lebel was aware of the significance of the work that he was offering to the exhibition.<sup>969</sup> There is no indication that he believed that the drawing should be kept secret, nor any indication that Duchamp either encouraged or discouraged the loan. Beyond offering the full text of the inscription on the verso of the work, “*Cols Alités. Projet pour le Modèle 1959 de la Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, meme,*”<sup>970</sup> Lebel said virtually nothing about it. Rather than explaining or describing this work, which had been displayed publicly only once and had never been reproduced in print, Lebel merely enclosed a photograph of the drawing with his offer.<sup>971</sup> Surprising as it may seem today, nothing in the appearance of the work struck either White or Hamilton as particularly significant or tantalizing. Thus, despite their stated desire to make this exhibition as complete as possible, they declined Lebel’s offer.

Duchamp also put Richard Hamilton in contact with his old paramour, Maria Martins.<sup>972</sup> Mrs. Martins had not been contacted by Walter Hopps during preparations for the retrospective in Pasadena, though she owned an extremely significant work by Duchamp, his *Coffee Mill* of 1911. (figure 2.04) This work had been included in Robert Lebel’s *catalogue raisonné* but had only been exhibited publicly once before.<sup>973</sup> Despite being rarely displayed, this humble work heralded the start of both the depiction of motion and the use of machine imagery within Duchamp’s work, as well as being one of the earliest instances of the machine aesthetic within twentieth century painting.<sup>974</sup>

The request with which Hamilton approached Maria Martins was exclusively for the loan of the *Coffee Mill*. Duchamp also reiterated Hamilton’s request when he and Maria were in New York together, almost immediately after the initial letter was sent. Not only did Maria Martins happily acquiesce to loan the *Coffee Mill*, she also

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<sup>969</sup> Lebel is among those whom some art historians have speculated knew about the *Etant Donnes* during Duchamp’s life. ‘Excerpts from the West Coast Duchamp Symposium,’ (Appendix C), *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 121. André Gervais, ‘Details d’Étant Donnés,’ *Cahiers du Musée National d’Art Moderne*, Printemps 2001, pp. 82-97 (p. 91).

<sup>970</sup> Letter from Robert Lebel to Gabriel White, 13 December 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders H-M).

<sup>971</sup> Ibid.

<sup>972</sup> More will be said about Duchamp’s relationship with Maria Martins in chapter seven.

<sup>973</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 237, pp. 558-559.

<sup>974</sup> Duchamp’s declarations about the primacy of the machine imagery in *Moulin à Café* has been commented upon in chapter two, above.

offered to loan the exhibition an unknown and unrequested additional work. The work she offered “*serait peut être très intéressant pour l'exposition, car il n'a jamais été ni photographié ni montré. Très peu de personnel l'ont vu et il est son dernier travail, datant entre 1943 et 1947. Son titre est “Étant donné le gaz d'éclairage et la chute d'eau.[sic]”*”<sup>975</sup> (figure 7.09)

This unseen work was, as the letter suggests, a preparatory study for the recently completed, though still secret, *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage*.<sup>976</sup> (figure 7.01) *Le gaz d'éclairage et la chute d'eau*, as the study loaned by Maria Martins has come to be known, was by no means Duchamp's last work, but it was the final study Duchamp prepared for his secret work. As such, this work gives the fullest impression of the finished state of the central nude figure of the *Étant Donnés* of any of the extant studies. As one might imagine the appearance of this work, so similar to the work that was to remain a secret until after his death, must have caused Duchamp some measure of consternation. According to Richard Hamilton, Duchamp saw the work hanging upon the gallery wall shortly before the exhibition opened: “‘Where did you get that?’ he demanded. ‘He was clearly angry. I somehow got the feeling that I had betrayed him. But he offered no information about it, and he said nothing about removing it from the show.’”<sup>977</sup>

Much as with Robert Lebel, it is not entirely clear whether Maria Martins was aware of the revelatory nature of the work she offered. When she responded to the Arts Council's initial request, she informed Gabriel White that Duchamp had “*m'a prié de vous prêter les œuvres que je possède de lui.*”<sup>978</sup> Her use of the plural indicates that Duchamp had requested that she loan more than just the *Coffee Mill*.<sup>979</sup> It may have been the case that Duchamp wished for a hint of his secret work to be included in this momentous exhibition, though his reaction in front of Richard

<sup>975</sup> Letter from Maria Martins to Gabriel White, 15 February 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders H-M).

<sup>976</sup> More will be said about the relationship between this study and the posthumous *Étant Donnés: 1° La Chute d'Eau, 2° Le Gaz d'Éclairage* the next chapter.

<sup>977</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 437. Tomkins cites interviews with Richard Hamilton as the source of this quote. A similar account is published in Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 264. In this instance Naumann cites a letter written to him by Richard Hamilton as the source of his quote.

<sup>978</sup> Letter from Maria Martins to Gabriel White, 15 February 1965. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders H-M).

<sup>979</sup> As of 1963 Maria Martins owned several works by Duchamp, including a deluxe *Boîte-en-Valise*, a deluxe *Boîte Verte*, the *Coffee Grinder* and three studies for the *Étant Donnés*.

Hamilton would seem to contradict that option. It is further possible that the offer of this work by Maria Martins was made out of spite. There is much speculation that Martins was the original model for the central figure of the *Étant Donnés*. Through the development of the work, however, the identity of the central figure was transposed to that of his new wife, Alexina Matisse. A famously jealous woman, the offer of Duchamp's closely held secret may also have been Mrs. Martins's revenge at her usurpation.

Despite the occasionally exceptional generosity of both private and institutional lenders, there remained certain substantial gaps in Duchamp's oeuvre, notably several key works that were simply too fragile to be permitted to travel. Thus, as was the case in Pasadena, replicas necessarily constituted a substantial portion of the works on display. Mary Sisler's collection, as has been mentioned, included a full suite of the replica readymades issued by Arturo Schwarz in 1964. These were used by Hamilton and White to both complement and supplement the readymades loaned by the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Arturo Schwarz also provided the Arts Council with a 1:1 scale photograph of the work *Door: 11, Rue Larrey*, (figure 6.13) which belonged to the Sisler Collection but could not be lent.<sup>980</sup>

The most substantial portion of unavailable works again proved again to be Duchamp's works on glass. Walter Hopps had overcome this difficulty in the Pasadena exhibition by borrowing replicas from those Ulf Linde had created for the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 1961. Hamilton approached the Moderna Museet in order to borrow Linde's replica of the *Rotary Glass Plates*, (figure 5.11) but that was to be the only replica work on glass borrowed by the Arts Council. Though Duchamp had signed Linde's replica of the *Large Glass* "*pour copie conforme*,"<sup>981</sup> Richard Hamilton was not satisfied with it. Having seen Linde's replica version of the *Large Glass* while it was on display in Pasadena, (figure 5.05) Hamilton decided that Linde's copy was

inadequate in that it wasn't of the quality of Duchamp's *Large Glass*, largely because Ulf Linde had no opportunity to see the original. He worked from

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<sup>980</sup> Letter from [Gabriel White] to Richard Hamilton, 10 May 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}). Letter from Gabriel White to Hugh Shaw, 12 May 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, Lenders H-M).

<sup>981</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 404 (a), p. 700.

photographs and had to make it quickly – he did a marvellous job considering the time in which it was done and the fact that he hadn't the opportunity to see Duchamp's *Glass*...<sup>982</sup>

Instead, it was Richard Hamilton's intention to create an entirely new replica of Duchamp's masterpiece.

Richard Hamilton had toyed with the prospect of making a replica of the *Large Glass* as far back as 1961.<sup>983</sup> The Duchamp retrospective provided such a perfect opportunity that the earliest preparatory notes on the exhibition include references to Hamilton replicating both the *Large Glass* and the "semi-circular glass," Duchamp's *Glider Containing Water Mill in Neighbouring Metals*.<sup>984</sup> Even before the initial arrangements for the exhibition itself had been finalized, Richard Hamilton and the Arts Council had received Duchamp's enthusiastic approval for this new replica. More importantly, as early as December 1964, Hamilton had managed to secure the necessary funding for the project through his friend and fellow Duchamp devotee, William Copley. Initially, the Tate Gallery had agreed to fund Hamilton's project and would thus take possession of the finished work. The funding was never approved, however, as the terms of the Tate Gallery's charter forbid the purchase and display of replicas.<sup>985</sup> Fortunately, Copley stepped in with an offer to provide all of the necessary funds, on the condition that the completed replica belonged to him.<sup>986</sup>

Throughout the process of replicating the *Large Glass* Richard Hamilton was conscious of the precedent that was Linde's replica and had consistently taken great care not to disparage his predecessor's work. Even in elucidating the shortcomings of Linde's replica, Hamilton was always careful to point out that "these are inadequacies

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<sup>982</sup> Jonathan Watkins, 'The Reconstruction of Duchamp's *Large Glass*: Richard Hamilton in Conversation with Jonathan Watkins,' *Art Monthly*, May 1990, pp. 3-5 (p. 3).

<sup>983</sup> Richard Hamilton, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, Again: A Reconstruction by Richard Hamilton of Marcel Duchamp's Large Glass*, (University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1966), p. 1.

<sup>984</sup> Memo from Gabriel White to Mr. McRoberts, 30 December 1964. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>985</sup> Watkins, 'The Reconstruction of Duchamp's *Large Glass*,' p. 4.

<sup>986</sup> For more information on the financing of Hamilton's *Large Glass* replica, and the events surrounding its eventual re-acquisition by the Tate Gallery ten years later, see Jonathan Watkins, 'The Reconstruction of Duchamp's *Large Glass*: Richard Hamilton in Conversation with Jonathan Watkins,' *Art Monthly*, May 1990, pp. 3-5.

[to] which I'm sure he too would attest."<sup>987</sup> He also expressed his gratitude for Linde's accomplishment, insisting that he should "be congratulated for having conceived the possibility of making a reconstruction – I would not have dared to consider it for the Tate otherwise."<sup>988</sup> Despite his admiration for Lebel's achievement, Hamilton nonetheless felt that the shortcomings of the initial reproduction were insurmountable.

The differences between Linde's *Glass* and the original had, in fact, been evident from the first. Upon initially seeing the work in 1961, Duchamp had advised Linde on how to bring his replica more in line with the original. He advised scraping away at the surface of the work to lighten the colour of the "Chocolate Grinder" element, which was too opaque.<sup>989</sup> In addition to the inconsistencies of pigment, "the drawing on [Linde's] *Glass* is not done with round wire, it's made from square section wire cut from sheets of lead."<sup>990</sup> Though seemingly small, the cumulative effects of these differences led even Duchamp to qualified praise of the object: "...it gives enough of an echo of the real thing, very close."<sup>991</sup>

Hamilton believed the lack of refinement was due to the way in which the endeavour had been approached. "It isn't possible to approach this task in the way that copies are usually made of paintings – to set up a canvas beside the original and reproduce the marks stroke for stroke."<sup>992</sup> What was needed instead was to use "the detailed documentation of the *Green Box* to cover the ground again – to reconstruct procedures rather than imitate the effects of action."<sup>993</sup> Thus, what Hamilton desired was a re-production of the work in the most literal sense, "following procedures rather than reproducing an image."<sup>994</sup>

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<sup>987</sup> Watkins, 'The Reconstruction of Duchamp's Large Glass,' p. 3.

<sup>988</sup> Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 264.

<sup>989</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>990</sup> Watkins, 'The Reconstruction of Duchamp's Large Glass,' p. 3.

<sup>991</sup> Interview of Duchamp by Alain Jouffroy, in 1961. Alain Jouffroy, *Une Révolution du Regard: à propos de quelques peintres et sculpteurs contemporains* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), pp. 107-24 (p. 119). Quoted in Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, p. 185.

<sup>992</sup> Richard Hamilton, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, Again: A Reconstruction*, p. 2.

<sup>993</sup> Ibid.

<sup>994</sup> Watkins, 'The Reconstruction of Duchamp's Large Glass,' p. 5.

Fortunately for the Arts Council of Great Britain, few were more familiar with the procedures involved in the creation of the *Large Glass* than Richard Hamilton. In 1960, Hamilton had helped to produce the first complete English typotranslation of the contents of Duchamp's *Green Box*. Throughout the translation process, Hamilton had kept in regular contact with Duchamp, who was needed to clarify the transposition of meaning within the translation. After his in depth study of the *Green Box* notes, and receiving accurate colour information on the various component elements from the original *Glass* in Philadelphia; Hamilton approached the re-creation of the *Large Glass* in much the same spirit as his typotranslation. While the actual work on the re-creation took place in Hamilton's studio at the University of Newcastle, where he was simultaneously employed as a member of the art teaching staff, he consulted with Duchamp continuously thorough the project.<sup>995</sup> (figure 6.14)

Despite his pre-existing familiarity with the components and procedures involved in the creation of the *Large Glass*, the task was still Herculean in scale. The re-enactment took more than a year to complete, and involved Hamilton also re-creating the studies that Duchamp had produced in preparation for the *Large Glass*. In addition to the planned reproduction of the semi-circular *Glider*, (figure 6.15) he also produced a reconstruction of the *Nine Malic Moulds*, (figure 6.16) as well as producing his own studies on glass for the *Sieves* (figure 6.17) element and the *Oculist Witnesses*. (figure 6.18) Richard Hamilton likened the process of re-creating the *Large Glass* to reproducing a machine or following a recipe.<sup>996</sup> "If *The Large Glass* had suffered the fate of total destruction..., a reconstruction would have been possible given only the *Green Box* plus a few fragments of the wreckage for specific colour references."<sup>997</sup> As this approach sought a "recapitulation of intention"<sup>998</sup> rather than a replication of appearance, the resulting replica lacked the individual history of the original. Thus, there has been no attempt to mimic the material degeneration, or more significantly the breaks, that had occurred since its definitive incompleteness in 1923.

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<sup>995</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 436.

<sup>996</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'Son of the Bride Stripped Bare,' *Art and Artists*, July 1966, pp. 22-26 (p. 23).  
Watkins, 'The Reconstruction of Duchamp's Large Glass,' p. 5.

<sup>997</sup> Richard Hamilton, 'The Bride Stripped Bare by Richard Hamilton, Even,' *Tate*, p. 58.

<sup>998</sup> Richard Hamilton, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, Again: A Reconstruction*, p. 2.

Even without the breaks, and with Hamilton's insistence that he was incapable of recapturing the high quality of workmanship that Duchamp originally employed, Duchamp agreed that this re-creation was as close as anyone could hope to get to the original.<sup>999</sup> Upon seeing the completed replica in London, Duchamp not only designated it "*copie conforme*," both he and Hamilton signed the work as a joint creation.<sup>1000</sup> (figure 6.19)

As Richard Hamilton dates his desire to create a full-scale replica of the *Large Glass* to the year following the completion of the publication of the *Green Box* notes, it is tempting to view his re-creation of one as the completion of the other. Given the regular collaboration and consultation between Hamilton and Duchamp throughout the 1960s, it is difficult to imagine that Hamilton did not mention his desire to re-create the *Large Glass* to Duchamp. Thus Duchamp's initial excitement at the prospect of the re-creation of the *Large Glass* was, in part, an approval of the completion of the dissemination of his masterpiece. As much as the creation of the *Large Glass* was the completion of the notes in the *Green Box*, so too was the creation of a durable and unbreakable *Large Glass* the completion of Hamilton's efforts at translating the contents of the *Green Box*. Both projects open the experience of the *Large Glass* to a far wider audience than was available to the originals of either work.

In addition to the *Large Glass* and its attendant studies, Richard Hamilton also reproduced one of Duchamp's most ephemeral readymades for the exhibition. The work *Sculpture for Travelling* was "*Ça fait une sorte de toile d'araignée de toutes les couleurs*" composed of strips cut from a variety of coloured rubber bathing caps.<sup>1001</sup> (figure 6.20) The form was then hung from the ceiling and attached to walls with string and nails in order that it fills any desired space. This object, which derived its name from the fact that it could be easily packed up and reassembled in another location, completely disintegrated during Duchamp's time in Buenos Aires, less than a year after its creation.<sup>1002</sup> In consultation with Duchamp, Richard Hamilton replicated the work for the first time at the Tate gallery retrospective. As with the

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<sup>999</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 436.

<sup>1000</sup> Ibid. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 404 (b), p. 700.

<sup>1001</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Jean Crotti, 8 July 1918; in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 19, p. 53.

<sup>1002</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 355, p. 659.

works on glass, Duchamp signed the replica, “*pour copie conforme.*” Though more robust than its predecessor - the replica of *Sculpture for Traveling* was displayed in two further exhibitions - it too has since dissolved into a “gooey mess.”<sup>1003</sup>

Having sought such thoroughgoing comprehensiveness in loans and reproductions, it is not surprising that the pursuit of an “almost complete” companion work became an equally consuming goal for the exhibition’s organizers. Early in the development of the exhibition it was determined that the catalogue should be “as complete as possible.”<sup>1004</sup> This desire for completeness was born simultaneously from the extensive loans being granted to the exhibition, and from the singularity of the exhibition itself. As it became increasingly apparent that this exhibition would be both the largest and most extensive retrospective of Duchamp’s work ever held, and the only showing of the retrospective in Europe, it was decided that the accompanying catalogue should reflect the magnitude of the exhibition.

It was in pursuit of this degree of completion that Gabriel White eagerly agreed to Arturo Schwarz’s offer to include the indexed and annotated bibliography he was compiling. In addition to its academic completeness, the decision was also taken for the catalogue itself to be comprehensively illustrated and annotated. Virtually every work listed in the catalogue is accompanied by a good-sized black and white photograph, with the most important works reproduced on full colour plates following the list of works. Interestingly, six works that were not present in the exhibition are not only listed in the catalogue, but are likewise illustrated.<sup>1005</sup> These six “important things,” which had been deemed unavailable for loan, were placed in their appropriate chronological order within the catalogue and left unnumbered. The inclusion of these unexhibited works completed the lines of continuity drawn by the retrospective and provided a fuller context for the works that were on display.

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<sup>1003</sup> Letter from Richard Hamilton to Francis Naumann, 22 December 1995. Quoted in Naumann, *The Art of Making Art*, p. 269.

<sup>1004</sup> Draft of memo from Hugh Shaw to the Arts Council, 5 August 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {a}).

<sup>1005</sup> These works were the *Sketch for Chess Players*, Nov.-Dec. 1911 (Schwarz, no. 234); *Sad Young Man on a Train*, Dec. 1911 (Schwarz, no. 238); *King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes*, May 1912 (Schwarz, no. 248); *Gustave Candel’s Mother*, 1911-13 (Schwarz, no. 241); *Chocolate Grinder*, No. 2, Feb. 1914 (Schwarz, no. 291); *To Be Looked at...*, 1918 (Schwarz, no. 362); and *Anagramme*, 1961 (Schwarz, no. 578).



Moreover, it enabled the catalogue to function independently as a fairly complete survey of the artist's work.

In addition to completing the “almost complete” exhibition, the illustrations and commentary in the Tate catalogue filled a distinct niche within the literature on Duchamp. While Robert Lebel's *catalogue raisonné* contained one hundred and twenty-two illustrations, these images were all printed *en bloc*, separately from the catalogue listings. The catalogue for the Tate exhibition, on the other hand, included nearly two hundred illustrations, each positioned adjacent to the catalogue entries for the works illustrated.<sup>1006</sup> As an exhibition catalogue, *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, could not have been as comprehensive as Lebel's *catalogue raisonné*, however its additions made it an essential companion to Lebel's work. Moreover, the format established by this catalogue would be replicated in Schwarz's *catalogue raisonné* of Duchamp's work, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, published only three years later.

Not only was the catalogue a success, but the exhibition was also fairly well received. According to Gabriel White, “The show is drawing about 800 people a day which is nothing sensational but I hear nothing but praise from everyone I meet who has been to see it.”<sup>1007</sup> More importantly however, the exhibition was heavily attended by members of the press. The exhibition was covered by virtually every newspaper and magazine operating in London, as well as several further afield. And, while the reviews are mixed in tone, they are almost all lengthy and considered.<sup>1008</sup> Even those reviewers expressing loathing for Duchamp and ire at the exhibition implicitly acknowledged that its portrayal of Duchamp was one that could not be brushed aside lightly. Richard Hamilton's portrayal of Duchamp as an innovator of contemporary art went wholly unchallenged. Those reviewers who questioned the

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<sup>1006</sup> The second edition of the catalogue contains 194 illustrations in black and white, with an additional 6 in colour. *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by Gabriel White and Richard Hamilton (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1966).

<sup>1007</sup> Letter from Gabriel White to Richard Hamilton, 29 June 1966. ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {a}).

<sup>1008</sup> The average length of review of the exhibition was three columns of type.

merits of the exhibition were forced to frame their criticism by questioning the merits of those innovations.<sup>1009</sup>

The difference between the press coverage of the exhibition in Pasadena and the Tate retrospective goes beyond the credence granted by the localized press however. Local papers from as far north as Birmingham and Sheffield sent reporters to cover the exhibition,<sup>1010</sup> as did reviewers from Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and France.<sup>1011</sup> Interest was greater still outwith the realm of the lay press. An entire issue of the fledgling magazine, *Arts and Artists* was devoted to Duchamp and his work.<sup>1012</sup> Likewise, the BBC arts magazine, *New Release*, produced a documentary on Duchamp,<sup>1013</sup> and an episode of the radio programme, *The Critics*, was devoted to the question, “Duchamp, snark or boojum?”<sup>1014</sup>

Unsurprisingly, in light of the effort he put into bringing the exhibition about, Duchamp was an active participant in the publicity surrounding the event. While in London for the exhibition, Duchamp provided a lengthy interview for *Studio International*.<sup>1015</sup> Even after departing for his holiday in France, Duchamp found himself in the midst of publicity occasioned by this first European exhibition. While in Paris, Duchamp gave interviews to the Belgian documentarian, Jean Antoine,<sup>1016</sup>

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<sup>1009</sup> Richard Seddon, ‘Duchamp at the Tate,’ *Birmingham Post*, 18 June 1966, n.p. Denys Sutton, ‘The Consensus Again,’ *Financial Times*, 28 June 1966, n.p. Robert Melville, ‘Marcel Duchamp,’ *The New Statesman*, 1 July 1966, p. 25. Bryan Robertson, ‘The Complete Works,’ *Spectator*, 24 June 1966, n.p. Copies of these reviews can be found in the ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>1010</sup> Seddon, ‘Duchamp at the Tate,’ n.p. W. S. Taylor, ‘Duchamp, the anti-artist,’ *Sheffield Telegraph*, 28 June 1966, n.p. Copies of these reviews can be found in the ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>1011</sup> Michael Minde, ‘Bärtige Mona Lisa im Goldrahmen,’ *Valksrecht*, 25 June 1966, n.p. Fritz Thor, ‘Vater des Nihilismus,’ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 28 June 1966, n.p. Peter Fischer, ‘Bärtige Mona Lisa im Goldrahmen,’ *Saarbrücker Zeitung*, 5 July 1966, p. 5. Julian Exner, ‘Der Großvater von Op und Pop,’ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, p. 4. Julian Exner, ‘Das große Rätsel,’ *Der Tagesspiegel*, 28 July 1966, p. 4. W. V. Die, ‘Kunst in London,’ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 26 July 1966, p. 3. Copies of these reviews can be found in the ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>1012</sup> *Art and Artists*, volume 1, number 4, July 1966.

<sup>1013</sup> ‘Ready-Made Rebel,’ *New Release*, Dir. by Lee Ayien and John Mapplebeck, produced by Melvyn Bragg, broadcast on BBC-2, 23 June 1966, 8.30 pm.

<sup>1014</sup> Harry Craig, Karl Miller, Jack Lambert, David Piper, and Jacques Brunius, ‘The Critics,’ BBC Home Service, broadcast 3 July 1966, 12.10 – 12.55 pm. A transcript of the programme can be found in ACGB/121/310 (Marcel Duchamp, 1966, File {b}).

<sup>1015</sup> Dore Ashton, ‘An interview with Marcel Duchamp,’ *Studio International*, 171 (June 1966), pp. 244-247.

<sup>1016</sup> This interview was taken in the summer of 1966, and was broadcast as part of the program *Signe des Temps* on Belgian Television in 1971. The transcript has been published as Jean Antoine, ‘Life is a Game; Life is Art,’ *The Art Newspaper*, April 1993, pp. 16-17.

and to Jean-Jacques Lebel, son of Robert Lebel.<sup>1017</sup> To all appearances, and however unintentional, the singularity of the Tate Gallery exhibition served to intensify the publicity surrounding it; much as the inaccessibility of Duchamp's own oeuvre had added to the prestige of his own reputation.

Possibly the most significant feature of the Tate Gallery exhibition, though, is the precedents that it set for the retrospectives that would follow. Not only was the exhibition catalogue a stylistic precursor to Schwarz's forthcoming *catalogues raisonné*, the exhibition itself set the tone for future retrospectives. As is implied by the very title, *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, completeness would become the supreme goal of all future Duchamp retrospectives. The size of Duchamp's established oeuvre at the time of his death would become ever greater as art historians and curators continue to search for previously unknown works. Much like the appearance of *Le gaz d'éclairage et la chute d'eau*, there is constant hope that a new work will reveal more about Duchamp and his other work than has yet been discovered.

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<sup>1017</sup> Jean-Jacques Lebel, 'Mise au Point,' *La Quinzaine Littéraire*, October 1966, pp. 4-6.

Étant Donnés: 1° La Chute d'Eau, 2° Le Gaz d'Éclairage

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On the morning of 7 July 1969, one of the art world's most firmly entrenched myths was quietly and unobtrusively shattered. Since the mid 1930s, all printed matter concerning Marcel Duchamp had included, as a matter of course, that he had “retired” from art, preferring life as a dilettante and internationally ranked chess player. Duchamp's storied retirement was so exceptional to writers and reporters accustomed to the Puritan work ethic of the United States that, though he made this claim no more than a few times in the late 1920s and early 1930s, it soon became a central pillar of the growing Duchampian mythology. So central was this myth of early retirement to the general understanding of Duchamp's art and life, that it was mentioned in nearly every one of the obituaries that appeared in the wake of his death on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1968.<sup>1018</sup>

Nine months after Duchamp's death, more than three decades of assumptions were called into question when the Philadelphia Museum of Art unveiled *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage*. (figure 7.01) This work, which is generally accepted as intrinsically linked with Duchamp's *Large Glass*, (figure 3.12) is almost equally intricate and difficult to describe.

To reach the room in which the *Étant Donnés* has been installed, the viewer must pass through a large gallery dedicated exclusively to the work of Marcel Duchamp; in the centre of which is the *Large Glass*, exactly where Duchamp

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<sup>1018</sup> John Canaday, 'Iconoclast, Innovator, Prophet,' *The New York Times*, 3 October 1968, p. 51. Alexander Keneas, 'Enigmatic Giant of Modern Art,' *The New York Times*, 3 October 1968, p. 1, 51.

positioned it in 1954. At the far side of this gallery there is an opening in the wall leading to what looks like an empty gallery. There is nothing welcoming about the room; it is effectively dark, with the only light that which radiates in from the one adjoining gallery. There are no immediately apparent works of art in the room, adding to the impression that the room has somehow fallen into disuse. The room is also carpeted, a further subtle distinction between this small room and the rest of the hardwood floors in the museum's galleries.

Those visitors whose curiosity leads them to accept the risk of possibly stumbling upon museum offices, a poorly marked construction site, or a gallery in the midst of being re-hung, will find more questions raised than answered. Built almost seamlessly into the most distant wall of the small room, they find a large, brick-framed, wooden door. (figure 7.02) The sheer incongruity of this sight, as well as the low lighting, all but forces the visitor to approach the door once its presence has been divined. Unlike any other door in the museum, this one is oversized, wooden, unfinished and apparently exceptionally old. Reminiscent of a barn door, though reduced in size, the silvered and weather beaten wood, as well as the patching at the lower left side, give the impression that this door is significantly older than the building into which it has been built. Likewise, the bleached, chipped and equally weathered bricks out of which the arched door-frame has been constructed, only underscore the dissonance between the timeless agrarian setting in which the door belongs and the decidedly twentieth-century building in which it is situated.

Even within a museum that had been an innovating force in the use of antique architectural features and furniture to create period-specific environments for the display of artworks,<sup>1019</sup> the appearance of a decontextualized and clearly incongruous door cries out for explanation. As there are no wall labels, or any other traditional indicators of a work of art, the visitor is drawn further into the room in search of information. Any suspicions that the door might be a functioning passageway are dispelled with a gentle push. It is, however, only when the visitor is within arms-length of the door that he or she is able to discern the two small holes concealed amongst the large iron studs holding the door together.

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<sup>1019</sup> George and Mary Roberts, *Triumph on Fairmount*, pp. 53-54.

These two holes, piercing the wooden door exactly 1.536 metres off the ground, are slightly below the eye-level of the average viewer.<sup>1020</sup> The viewer's initial identification of these holes as knot-holes of the kind employed by the stereotypical peeping-tom is belied by their smooth, well-worn edges and the fact that they are positioned symmetrically along the seam between the two doors. It is this association, however, that provides the viewer with his or her only indication of what to do next.

Stooping to peer through the holes in the door, the viewer finds a scene even more incongruous and surreal than that of the decontextualized door through which he or she is looking. (figure 7.03) The first thing that the viewer notices is the nude woman lying in a bed of twigs and dead leaves. This figure, both fantastically life-like and perfectly still, lays on what appears to be the crest of a hill, such that her body rests at approximately a 60° angle to the door through which she is seen. Because of this angle, the viewer is fully aware of the figure's nudity despite her recumbent pose. Easily the most striking feature of this figure is the pose she has adopted. She is positioned with her legs splayed, baring her hairless pudendum to the viewer.

It is this prominent and erotically charged feature, which attracts the initial attention of the viewer. Drawing his or her eyes from this feature, the viewer next notices the peculiar surroundings in which the figure rests. Despite the fact that the viewer is facing the interior of a major metropolitan art museum, the viewer finds him or herself looking out onto a distant autumnal landscape. The nude figure's bed of twigs and leaves falls away quickly, creating a shallow foreground that occupies the lower half of one's field of vision. Beyond the edge of the bed of twigs, a distant, tree-filled, and almost hyper-real sky-line is visible. As the shallow foreground tapers off to the right one notices a break in the thick growth of trees, through which a waterfall flows. The area surrounding the waterfall is suffused with light and its steady flow is the only movement anywhere in the scene.

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<sup>1020</sup> This equates to a height of approximately 5 feet, 0.5 inches. The height of the holes was noted in Duchamp's hand upon the card model inserted in the manual of instructions for the *Étant Donnés*. Marcel Duchamp, *Manual of Instructions for Étant Donnés: 1° La Chute d'Eau, 2° Le Gaz d'Éclairage...* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1987), n.p.

Immediately upon examining the waterfall, the viewer's eye is returned to the nude figure, specifically to the antique gas lamp that she holds aloft. Though one is in the foreground, and the other in the distance, these two elements appear to be situated side-by-side from the vantage point of the viewer. The unity of these two features is particularly interesting since the scene as a whole seems to defy attempts to draw connections between various elements. Not only are these two elements situated side-by-side, they are further unified through a similarity of shape between the manchon<sup>1021</sup> in the lamp and the brightly reflective sheen of the waterfall, the two brightest elements of the scene. More significantly though, these two features lend a sense of reality to the scene as the only two visible indicators of life. As the waterfall is the only moving element visible, its connection with the lamp is striking as the nude figure's firm grasp of the lamp's base and her triumphantly raised arm are the only proofs that she is alive and her posture is one of repose.

Returned to the nude figure, the viewer's attention is drawn down along her raised arm and back to the anonymous splayed torso. As the setting provides no hints to the identity of the figure or the reason behind her pose, the viewer looks to the figure herself for insight. Immediately, these attempts are stymied as the viewer becomes painfully aware of the brickwork frame to this scene. Her left leg, from below mid calf, and her right leg, from just above her knee, are both hidden from view by the awkward shape of this brick opening. More important to her identity, however, her right arm and head are also wholly obscured from view. All that can be seen is a gentle curl of dark blonde hair that has fallen onto her chest. This tantalizing hint at the figure's identity causes the viewer to shift and attempt to adjust his or her position in order to see around the brick obstruction, to no avail.

It is only insofar as it prevents the viewer from seeing the whole of the nude figure that he or she confronts the second opening through which the scene is experienced. In addition to the peep-holes in the door, the viewer is also looking through a large, oddly-shaped hole in the remains of a brick wall. This wall stands only a few feet from the door and looks as though something has burst through it with

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<sup>1021</sup> In this context, a 'manchon' is a small cotton sleeve, sometimes called a 'Welsbach mantle' that has been soaked in a solution of approximately 99% thorium nitrate and 1% cerium. The heat from a gas flame at the centre of this sleeve causes the rare earth elements in the manchon to emit a bright glow.

incredible precision, leaving a gaping, jagged hole, while somehow allowing the wall to maintain its structural integrity.

This wall not only prevents the viewer from obtaining answers, it introduces new questions into the already surreal environment. The most obvious questions regard the nature and origin of the hole itself. Beyond this however, the awareness of this hole causes the viewer to reassess the level of remove between him or her self and the scene beyond. Rather than the scene being on the other side of the door, as the viewer initially thinks, instead there is a shallow room which separates the viewer from the scene. This completely dark room is almost edited out of the viewer's perception, in favour of the more stimulating hyper-realistic scene it surrounds. The fact that this substantial space is so easily ignored might cause the viewer to question why it is there in the first place. The most likely answer, and its most prominent function, seems to be to control how much of the distant scene can be seen from the small holes in the door.

It doesn't take long to realise that the view through the two eye-holes is unalterably fixed. Upon pulling back from the eye-holes and examining the door again, the viewer might try to cheat and catch an alternative view through one of the ample cracks in the weathered door. Contrary to the expectations created by the vivid scene, anyone peeking through other nearby cracks in the door only encounters darkness. Discovering the fruitlessness of trying to find an alternate view, the viewer's only options are to return to the previous controlled vantage point through the eye-holes provided, or leave this room to return to the remainder of the museum.

**“The great artist of tomorrow will go underground.”<sup>1022</sup>**

The enigma of the *Étant Donnés* extends beyond the experience and interpretation of the finished work. One of its most significant features is the extreme and unusual secrecy that shrouded its very creation. Even now, little is known with any certainty about the history of the physical creation of this work. The only information that Duchamp directly provided about the development of this piece are the years during which he worked on it. These dates, 1946-1966, are inscribed upon

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<sup>1022</sup> John Canaday, 'Whither Art?' *The New York Times*, 26 March 1961, section X, p. 15.



the right shoulder and upper arm of the central nude figure, and are repeated on a narrow strip of paper affixed to the first page in the manual of instructions Duchamp produced for assembling the piece. Despite the lack of contemporaneous comment on the work, a rather general history of *Étant Donnés* can be pieced together with some certainty based upon those creations of Duchamp's that were either studies for, or by-products of the *Étant Donnés*' construction.

There are a total of four extant studies for the *Étant Donnés*, the earliest of which, *Étant Donnés: Maria, la chute d'eau et le gaz d'éclairage*, dates to December 1947.<sup>1023</sup> (figure 7.04) This simple pencil drawing shows the torso and legs of an otherwise nude female figure. The pose of the figure is similar to that of the nude female in the finished work; her right leg is in a roughly straight line with her torso, while her left leg is thrown out to the side in a similarly erotic and shameless pose. Unlike the nude in the finished work however, both legs are fully articulated and visible and neither of the figure's arms is developed beyond the darkened indication of underarms. Also, the figure's pudendum, almost aggressively real in its hairless articulation within the *Étant Donnés*, is still the central focus, though here shown with only the minimal depiction of a cleft, the remaining detail shrouded in the darkness of her pubis.

The most interesting feature of this early study is that, unlike the completed work, the identity of the nude figure in this study is definitively known. The title of this work, *Étant Donnés: Maria, la chute d'eau et le gaz d'éclairage*, written at the bottom of the page along with Duchamp's signature and the date, reveals the nude figure as Maria Martins. Martins, a sculptress and the wife of Carlos Martins, the Brazilian ambassador to the United States, was one of the three greatest love interests in Duchamp's life. The two may have met as early as 1943 at an exhibition of her sculpture and the paintings of Piet Mondrian at the Valentine Gallery in New York City.<sup>1024</sup> Their affair reached its peak around 1946, and ultimately dissolved in 1951

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<sup>1023</sup> *Étant Donnés: Maria, la chute d'eau et le gaz d'éclairage* was referenced in Robert Lebel's 1959 monograph, in which it was dated to 1944 (Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, no. 186, p. 175). The drawing itself, however, bears both the full title and the date "Dec 1947."

<sup>1024</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 354. Francis M. Naumann, 'Marcel & Maria,' *Art in America*, April 12001, pp. 98-111, 157.

following her husband's retirement from the diplomatic corps and subsequent return to Brazil.<sup>1025</sup>

While the pencil sketch of the nude Maria includes no background detail, it has been suggested that the positioning of the figure and the way in which she has been foreshortened are indications that Duchamp had developed a clear understanding of the layout of *Étant Donnés* from an early stage.<sup>1026</sup> Bolstering such an assessment is the fact that soon after completing the first study for the central figure in 1947, Duchamp engaged in at least one speculative study of the placement of the various compositional elements, an untitled collage study for the *Étant Donnés*. (figure 7.05) This undated study on board clearly follows the pencil study chronologically. The figure of Maria still maintains the defined musculature of the pencil study, though now in darker, more confident lines.

Unlike the earlier pencil study, *Étant Donnés: Maria*, the nude in this instance is only one collage element within the composition. Despite the fact that the nude figure has been cut out of one piece of paper and mounted onto this board, her position within the overall composition is nearly identical to that of the earlier pencil sketch. While the nude is the dominant, or only, figure within both picture planes, both times she is placed just to the left of centre. This odd placement within the pencil study begins to make sense if we assume that from the outset Maria's pose was determined by an anticipation of the *Étant Donnés* environment. That he already had this environment, a landscape view, firmly in mind is evident in the use as background of a scene he had photographed the previous year in Chexbres, Switzerland. (figure 7.06)

These photographs, which date from 1946, suggests that while the nude figure was based on Maria Martins, the composition as a whole was born during a visit to Europe with his life-long friend and paramour of the 1920s and 30s, Mary Reynolds. During his three month return visit to Europe following the end of the Second World War, Mary and Duchamp spent a week at a small hotel in the village of Chexbres, in

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<sup>1025</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, pp. 365-367.

<sup>1026</sup> D'Hanroncourt and Hopps, *Étant Donnés*, p. 12. *Marcel Duchamp*, ed. by Anne D'Hanroncourt and Kynaston McShine, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), p. 306.

Switzerland, overlooking Lake Geneva.<sup>1027</sup> Duchamp took several photographs of the picturesque ravine and waterfall that separates the village of Chexbres from the neighbouring village of Puidoux. It is a copy of this photograph that appears in the second study for the *Étant Donnés*,<sup>1028</sup> and is only minimally altered in the completed work. Duchamp's consistent placement of the nude figure indicates that he placed equal importance upon both elements, developing them virtually simultaneously.<sup>1029</sup>

In addition to the overall composition of the piece, one can also see at this early stage that Duchamp intended the final work to be sculptural. It initially appears as though the nude figure in the *Collage Study* is cut from a sketch similar to that of the earlier pencil study. Upon closer inspection, however, one can see that Duchamp had already begun building up the figure in a preliminary fashion by applying a textured layer of wax to the form.<sup>1030</sup> Similarly, there is an implied three-dimensionality to the way in which the various elements have been layered. This is most noticeable with regard to the more prominent pieces of foliage in the scene. Both the bushes to the left of the nude and the cypress tree that divides the scene vertically overlap with the nude figure, implying an ambiguous sense of depth. In addition, they have not been applied flush to the background or the nude, creating a sense of depth through the narrow band of shadow that surrounds both bushes. The effect is something like that of a shallow diorama.

One of the most interesting things about this study, however, is the development of the nude figure's arms. While they were nonexistent in the sketch *Étant Donnés: Maria*, by the time the *Collage Study* was completed, not only has she developed arms, but they are in much the same position as they would come to appear in the completed *Étant Donnés*. Her left arm is particularly interesting as, while still held aloft during this early stage, she does not yet appear to be holding the antique gas lamp that is such an important element of the finished piece. It is apparent from the manner in which her arm is raised, and forearm foreshortened, that she is meant to be

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<sup>1027</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 359.

<sup>1028</sup> That the base of this collage is an unaltered photograph can be seen in the space immediately to the left of the figure's torso and upper-thigh. Still visible through the bush are the windows and rooflines of the buildings that overlook the waterfall in the original image.

<sup>1029</sup> The use of the photograph, taken during his relationship with Mary Reynolds, is included within the image in homage to his decades-long relationship with Reynolds, which will be addressed later.

<sup>1030</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 527, p. 790.

holding something aloft and towards the viewer. The way in which the nude's hand is clasped bears a greater resemblance to an undated plaster study (figure 7.07) than it does to the hand clasped about the Bec Auer lamp in the finished *Étant Donnés*, suggesting that Duchamp may have initially envisioned the female figure holding something else.

The best indication of what else she may have originally held is given by this *Untitled Plaster Study*, also the first three-dimensional study of the central nude figure.<sup>1031</sup> While this little-known study in plaster is unnamed and undated, we can reasonably identify it as having been created after the *Collage Study*, and approximately concurrently with the drawing *Réflexion à Main* in 1948. (figure 7.08) Beyond the continuing development of the nude as an isolated sculptural element, little has changed in the position and posture of the nude between the *Untitled Plaster Study* and the *Collage Study* that preceded it. With the *Untitled Plaster Study*, however, Duchamp has begun to explore a more constricted view of the nude figure, one in which not only the head and right arm are obscured but also the lower half of the figure's legs. Additionally, this is the first instance in which the figure appears hairless.

What has not changed between these two studies is the figure's raised left arm. In the *Untitled Plaster Study* Duchamp has retained the foreshortened forearm and vertically clenched fist that were seen in the *Collage Study*. (figure 7.05) In the *Plaster Study*, however, we can begin to see what the figure is clenching in her fist. Protruding from the top of the fist is a narrow cylindrical object. While this alone does not provide much more information about the object held by the nude, it does permit a parallel to be drawn between this study and the original work included within the *Boîte-en-Valise* acquired by Hélène and Henri Hoppenot in 1949, *Réflexion à Main*.<sup>1032</sup>

The recipient of this deluxe Boîte, Henri Hoppenot was the French ambassador to Switzerland, and one of Duchamp's hosts during his 1946 visit to

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<sup>1031</sup> This is the only known study for the central nude figure that is not included in any edition of Schwarz's *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*.

<sup>1032</sup> Naumann, 'Marcel & Maria,' pp. 107-109.

Europe.<sup>1033</sup> Mary Reynolds had become friends with the Hoppenot's daughter Violane during the war, as both were active in the French resistance. It was Hélène who suggested the hotel in Chexbres that brought Duchamp into contact with the waterfall and by extension began the creation of *Étant Donnés* environment.<sup>1034</sup> Thus, it is appropriate that the original work included within their *Boîte-en-Valise* should be such an oblique, yet concrete reference to the work that they, however unknowingly, helped to bring about.

This drawing, dated 1948, is a pencil study of a distinctly feminine hand clasping the cylindrical stem of a hand mirror. (figure 7.08) The solid black circle of paper that forms the body of the mirror has caused the image to be read as though the mirror were held up to show the viewer his or her reflection.<sup>1035</sup> The potential inclusion of a mirror within the *Étant Donnés*, reflecting back the viewer's gaze, would have been in keeping with the assessment of the piece as a counterpoint or companion piece to the *Large Glass*. Both of the collections of notes regarding the *Large Glass*, the *Green Box* and the *White Box*, abound with notes employing the motif of the mirror. Specifically, within the *Boîte Verte*, the mirror is used to describe the futility of the bachelors' attempts at coitus; they are unable to pass through to the Bride's domain. "They would have been as if enveloped, alongside their regrets, by a mirror reflecting back to them their own complexity to the point of [deluding them] rather onanistically."<sup>1036</sup>

If this drawing is, as it appears to be, a study for a specific element of the *Étant Donnés*, it would provide credence for interpretations that parallel the interior space of *Étant Donnés* with the bride's domain in the *Large Glass*.<sup>1037</sup> Much like the bachelors within the *Large Glass*, the viewer's attempts to connect with the nude figure, or bride, are stopped by the barrier between the two realms. In the voyeur's

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<sup>1033</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 359.

<sup>1034</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1035</sup> Naumann, 'Marcel & Maria,' p. 108. Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, p. 292.

<sup>1036</sup> Marcel Duchamp, 'La Mariée Mise à Nu par ses Célibataires, Même,' 1934, in *Marchand du Sel*, ed. by Sanouillet and Peterson, p. 51.

<sup>1037</sup> William Copley, 'The New Piece,' *Art in America*, July-August 1969, p. 36. D'Harnoncourt and Hopps, *Étant Donnés*, pp. 24-25. Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 454.

attempts “to pass beyond the Mask”<sup>1038</sup> and decipher the bride’s identity, he or she would have been met only by his or her own voyeuristic eyes staring back.

The immediate obstacle we must confront if we are to accept that *Réflexion à Main* is a detail from a study for *Étant Donnés* is the location of the “illuminating gas” of the title, usually identified with the Bec Auer lamp. This problem is compounded by the fact that the final title differs little from its initial appearance on the pencil drawing of 1946. The art historian Francis Naumann has suggested that Duchamp may have intended at this stage to position the illuminating gas elsewhere in the work, possibly even somewhere that was only visible by looking into the mirror.<sup>1039</sup> While Duchamp ultimately did not include the mirror within the assemblage, that its inclusion was actively considered must be taken into account. Interestingly, the Bec Auer lamp within the final version of *Étant Donnés* does not appear in any of the preparatory studies for the work.

The final study Duchamp produced in preparation for *Étant Donnés* was another plaster model titled, *Le Gaz d’Éclairage et la Chute d’Eau*. (figure 7.09) As with the previous *Untitled Plaster Study*, *Le Gaz d’Éclairage et la Chute d’Eau* is an exploration of the nude female figure, independent of the *Étant Donnés* environment. This final study, however, brings the nude figure even closer to her final appearance within *Étant Donnés*. By the completion of *Le Gaz d’Éclairage et la Chute d’Eau* Duchamp had progressed in his explorations and had settled upon the technique he would employ in order to achieve the alarming realism of the central figure within the *Étant Donnés*. Having achieved the supple visual effects of flesh in plaster with his *Untitled Plaster Study*, Duchamp covered the nude in *Le Gaz d’Éclairage et la Chute d’Eau* with a layer of translucent pig skin, the underside of which he had painted to give it the pinkish European translucence of real human flesh.<sup>1040</sup>

In addition to exploring the visual effect of skin on the nude figure, Duchamp also began to incorporate the effect he would achieve with the brick wall in the final

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<sup>1038</sup> Duchamp, ‘La Mariée Mise à Nu par ses Célibataires, Même,’ in *Marchand du Sel*, ed. by Sanouillet and Peterson, p. 51. This quote is from the same note in the *Green Box* as that cited in footnote 1036 above.

<sup>1039</sup> Naumann, ‘Marcel & Maria,’ p. 108.

<sup>1040</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 462.

*Étant Donnés*. Rather than literally replicating the brick wall, a similar effect was achieved by nesting the figure in *Le Gaz d'Éclairage et la Chute d'Eau* within folds of black velvet (now faded to green), thus constricting the available view through an implied three-dimensional obstacle. In the previous studies, Duchamp had either sculpted the nude's limbs in full, including her left leg in *Étant Donnés: Maria*, and the *Collage Study*, or allowed limbs to stop abruptly and inexplicably, as he uniformly did with the figure's right arm. Here, however, additional elements have been introduced to constrict the available view, prefiguring the punctured brick wall in the final piece.

These preparatory studies are not the only physical evidence of the progression of the *Étant Donnés*. There is an additional group of works that can best be described as artefacts or by-products of the creation of the central nude figure. Unlike the preparatory studies, these galvanized plaster objects provide little obvious indication of the nature or appearance of the work in progress, particularly when seen in isolation. As such, Duchamp does not appear to have felt any need to keep these works hidden either in his own possession or that of a trusted confidant. Rather, these by-products were frequently presented to friends as small sculptures, as was the case in 1950 when he presented *Not a Shoe* (figure 7.10) to his friend, the collector and gallery owner Julien Levy.<sup>1041</sup>

Despite having been presented to a gallery owner, *Not a Shoe* is the only one of the *Étant Donnés*-related sculptures that was not shown publicly until after Duchamp's death, and has only been publicly exhibited three times in total.<sup>1042</sup> Given its comparatively low profile, less is known about this small object than any of the other sculptures that share its origins. Unfortunately, the only extant photograph of *Not a Shoe* focuses on the larger of its flat faces, which provides no indication of the surface of the nude figure with which it originally interacted. Close examination of the photo, however, reveals the presence of a ridge running down the centre of its otherwise curved side, indicating its use in the fastening of pig skin to the plaster armature of the central figure. Given that it is known to have been a "preliminary

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<sup>1041</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 535, p. 796.

<sup>1042</sup> Ibid. *Not a Shoe* was first shown in public in 1973 at the retrospective of Marcel Duchamp's work held jointly by the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Museum of Modern Art. Since then it has been shown at the Centre Pompidou in 1977 and the Palazzo Grassi in 1993.

version of the wedge section in *Wedge of Chastity*, 1954,”<sup>1043</sup> *Not a Shoe* was likely created in an early attempt to fasten and articulate the figure’s vagina.<sup>1044</sup>

The second plaster object to appear, *Female Fig Leaf*, (figure 7.11) is considerably less difficult to decipher. This slightly larger sculpture is clearly the positive cast of the negative space surrounding the female genitalia. If this piece had an initial function in the creation of the *Étant Donnés* nude, it was most likely involved either with the shaping and articulation of the vulva on the armature of the nude figure, or the application and fixing of the skin onto that armature, much like *Not a Shoe*. The possibility exists, additionally, that this sculpture was instead cast from an otherwise articulated, at least semi-finished version of the nude; effectively making *Female Fig Leaf* a souvenir rather than a working tool.

Such an identification would account for several of the more singular features of this *Étant Donnés*-related sculpture. Most notably, *Female Fig Leaf* is easily the most finished of all the small galvanized plaster sculptures. Its flat, or non-cast sides, are perfectly smooth giving the impression of intentional rather than accidental design. Similarly, the sinuous contours, particularly on the front and side of *Female Fig Leaf*, speak both to possible sculptural intentions in this object’s origins, and to its potential impracticality as a tool. It is not entirely clear how the sculpted edges of this item would accommodate the legs of the nude figure, nor is it apparent how effective this, the largest of the *Étant Donnés*-related sculptures, would be as a tool. With a width of 12.5 centimetres and a depth of 14 centimetres, *Female Fig Leaf* has a larger area of contact with the body of the nude than any of the other *Étant Donnés*-related sculptures. As such, it would make a far less precise tool than *Not a Shoe*, or the subsequent *Objet-dard*. (figure 7.12)

Furthering the prospect that *Female Fig Leaf* is more of a souvenir than a construction tool is the fact that this was the only one of the galvanized plaster sculptures for which two “originals” were created.<sup>1045</sup> Of the two originals, one was given to Man Ray as a parting gift when he left the United States for Paris in March of

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<sup>1043</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 535, p. 796.

<sup>1044</sup> Michael Taylor, ‘Eros Triumphant,’ in *Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia*, ed. by Jennifer Mundy (London: Tate Publishing, 2008) pp. 157-175 (pp. 158, 160).

<sup>1045</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 536, p. 797.



1951,<sup>1046</sup> (figure 7.11a) while the other remained in Duchamp's possession. (figure 7.11b) In focusing on the dominant characteristic of the *Étant Donnés* nude, Duchamp had the freedom to make this major work semi-public without compromising the secrecy he had maintained for the previous four years. As has been mentioned, the nature of *Female Fig Leaf* is not difficult to decipher, yet there is no indication that anyone questioned the origins or meaning behind the work. In fact, in Man Ray's nearly contemporaneous account of receiving the work, he describes it as: "an abstract galvanized plaster model... One of the few mysterious creations [Duchamp] produced from time to time."<sup>1047</sup>

The year 1951 also saw the appearance of the third *Étant Donnés* related sculpture, the strangely phallic *Objet-dard*. (figure 7.12) The homophonous title of this work is reminiscent of the many puns, or "Modified Printed Ready-mades"<sup>1048</sup> Duchamp produced throughout his life. A pun on the French *objet d'art*, the title of this piece translates literally as "dart object."<sup>1049</sup> In addition to its literal translation as "dart," *dard* is also a colloquialism meaning "penis," making this sculpture both an *objet d'art*, and an *Objet-dard*.

In addition to being one of Duchamp's many visual puns, *Objet-dard* is the only one of the *Étant Donnés*-related sculptures, the origin of which is definitively known. Despite its strangely penile shape, this object's origins are rather more banal than one might expect. The plaster shape with an inlaid rib of lead was originally part of the mould that shaped and supported the figure's left breast.<sup>1050</sup> When in position, this rib held the figure's skin firmly in place while the glue between the skin and the armature dried. The mould was broken by Duchamp when he was finished with it, and the suggestive shape of this piece lent itself to consideration as an *objet d'art* in its own right.<sup>1051</sup>

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<sup>1046</sup> Man Ray, *Self-Portrait*, p. 295.

<sup>1047</sup> Ibid. Man Ray's autobiography was originally published in 1963.

<sup>1048</sup> This was the name given to Duchamp's puns by Arturo Schwarz. See nos. 20, 22, 23, 28, 29 in Schwarz's 'Elements of a descriptive bibliography of Duchamp's writings, lectures, translations and interviews,' in *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, pp. 896-901.

<sup>1049</sup> This is the translation preferred in Schwarz's catalogue. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 542, p. 800.

<sup>1050</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1051</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 377.

Of all of the *Étant Donnés* related sculptures, *Objet-Dart* bears the least overt visual connection to the *Étant Donnés*, and the greatest web of associations to Duchamp's larger oeuvre. In addition to its chance origins, the understanding of which requires knowledge of the *Étant Donnés*, this small piece is demonstrative of two other strong and recurrent themes throughout Duchamp's work: eroticism and the flexibility of language. It is particularly in the cross-over between these two interests that *Objet-dart* has its clearest precedents; including the readymade *L.H.O.O.Q.* of 1919,<sup>1052</sup> (figure 2.03) the collage *Nous, Nous Cajalains* of the mid 1920s,<sup>1053</sup> (figure 7.13) and *La Fourchette du Cavalier* of 1943.<sup>1054</sup> (figure 7.14)

Following the appearance of *Objet-dard*, it was another three years before the final *Étant Donnés*-related sculpture appeared. As has already been mentioned, *Wedge of Chastity*<sup>1055</sup> (figure 7.15) is directly related to the first of the *Étant Donnés* related sculptures to appear, *Not a Shoe*. The two sculptures are so similar that the artist and art historian Ecke Bonk identified the wedge form within *Wedge of Chastity* and *Not a Shoe* as the same sculpture.<sup>1056</sup> Both Arturo Schwarz and Michael Taylor, however, assert that the two wedges are not identical, and that *Not a Shoe* is the preliminary version of the wedge element in *Wedge of Chastity*.<sup>1057</sup>

Regardless of whether or not the two wedges are entirely identical, the two works are so closely tied that we can safely assume that the wedge employed in *Wedge of Chastity* had been created no later than 1950 or 1951. The shape of the wedge element, like its relative *Not a Shoe*, suggests that it was originally created as a tool for shaping and fixing the skin covering the pudenda of the central figure within the *Étant Donnés*. Much as with the *Objet-dard*, a tool would have been necessary to fix and support the skin as it was being attached to the negative spaces of the figure.

While the internal element of the *Wedge of Chastity* appeared in 1950 or 1951, the sculpture as a whole was created as a wedding gift for Duchamp's second wife,

<sup>1052</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 369, p. 670.

<sup>1053</sup> Ibid., no. 412, p. 708.

<sup>1054</sup> Ibid., no. 491, p. 769.

<sup>1055</sup> Ibid., no. 545, pp. 802-803.

<sup>1056</sup> Bonk, *The Making of the Boîte-en-Valise*, p. 256.

<sup>1057</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, nos. 535 & 545, pp. 796 & 802. Taylor, 'Eros Triumphant,' in *Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia*, ed. by Mundy, p. 160.

Alexina Matisse, *née* Statler.<sup>1058</sup> As the wife of Pierre Matisse, the art dealer and son of Henri Matisse, Alexina, who went by her childhood nickname “Teeny,” was well known and well respected within both the American and European art worlds.<sup>1059</sup> She and Duchamp had met on a number of occasions, but had never become acquainted. It was not until 1951, when Dorothea Tanning and Max Ernst invited Duchamp to join them for a weekend at Teeny’s country home in Lebanon, New Jersey, that the two got to know one another.<sup>1060</sup> Just as Marcel’s infatuation with Maria Martins had recently ended, Teeny’s twenty year marriage to Pierre Matisse had ended two years previously. The two hit it off immediately, and Duchamp began spending his weekends with Teeny in New Jersey. When Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning moved to France later that year, Marcel and Teeny took over their apartment at 327 East 58<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>1061</sup>

It was on the occasion of their wedding that Duchamp created and presented Teeny with the *Wedge of Chastity*. Engraved on the largest flat side of the *Wedge of Chastity* is the simple inscription “pour Teeny/16 Jan. 1954/Marcel.”<sup>1062</sup> In later years Duchamp would liken the small sculpture to a wedding ring, claiming that they took it with them wherever they travelled.<sup>1063</sup>

Some art historians have suggested that, as a wedding gift, *Wedge of Chastity* was both unsentimental and ironic, particularly considering the sculpture’s physical identification with Maria Martins.<sup>1064</sup> It is worth noting that there is no indication that the gift was either given or received in that spirit. While it is difficult to know exactly when she became aware of the *Étant Donnés*, Teeny not only knew about the work, but occasionally aided Duchamp in both moving and constructing the piece.<sup>1065</sup> In her knowledge about the larger work, she was very probably aware of the origin or inspiration for the central figure. Despite her almost necessary knowledge of the role

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<sup>1058</sup> Duchamp had been married once before, to Lydie Sarazin-Levassor. The marriage lasted just under eight months, from 8 June 1927 to 25 January 1928. Tomkins, *Duchamp*, pp. 276-283.

<sup>1059</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>1060</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 381-382.

<sup>1061</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

<sup>1062</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 545, p. 802.

<sup>1063</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 88.

<sup>1064</sup> Alice Goldfarb-Marquis, *Marcel Duchamp: the Bachelor Stripped Bare* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2002), p. 267.

<sup>1065</sup> More will be said about Teeny’s role in the creation of *Étant Donnés* later in this chapter.

of Maria Martins in the history of the *Wedge of Chastity*, Teeny and Duchamp do appear to have kept the sculpture with them during their travels and after Duchamp's death, Teeny kept the sculpture for the rest of her life.

This behaviour suggests that, while the original impetus and model for the protagonist of *Étant Donnés* was undoubtedly Maria Martins, the identity of the female figure had, for both Teeny and Duchamp, come to transcend the physical circumstances of its creation. The work had begun as a gesture of love to Maria Martins, but after their affair ended in 1951, the work remained. Duchamp's output dropped at roughly the point when his relationship with Maria Martins ended and it is possible that Duchamp may have abandoned work on the *Étant Donnés* at this point, much as he had with the *Large Glass* twenty-eight years previously. Duchamp, in fact, produced nothing at all following the appearance of *Objet-Dard* in 1951, until August of 1953. If, however, the sculptural series of 1951 marks the relative completion of the central nude figure, this fallow period may merely indicate that his attention switched from the nude figure to the surrounding environment.

The re-emergence of Duchamp's artistic output with *Moonlight on the Bay at Basswood* (figure 7.16) in August of 1953, followed by *Wedge of Chastity* suggests a possible alternate reading of the *Étant Donnés* nude. As Duchamp's relationship and marriage to Teeny superseded his relationship with Maria Martins, so too did his identification of the *Étant Donnés* nude with Teeny supersede the identification of the nude with Maria Martins. The renewed appearance of creative activity in the months preceding his proposal to Teeny is not the only indication that such a transferral of identification occurred; identifying aspects of the nude figure were later altered to correspond to Teeny, though more will be said about this later.

If we grant the possibility that the central nude figure either had already, or was coming to be associated with Teeny, this explains why the ironic lack of sentiment identified by art historians in the gifting of *Wedge of Chastity* is not evident in Teeny or Duchamp's relationship. Rather, if the association with Maria is discarded, *Wedge of Chastity* becomes one of Duchamp's most erotic and deeply personal works.

As has already been established, the galvanized plaster “wedge” is functionally identical to the sculpture *Not a Shoe*. As a tool for fixing the skin to the armature of the nude, the *Wedge* is effectively a cast of the negative space of the nude figure’s vulva. Unlike *Female Fig Leaf*, however, in *Wedge of Chastity* this negative cast isn’t explicitly suggestive of the absent female pudenda from which the cast was made. Rather, its abstract shape acknowledges the presence of the pudenda while its solidity and specificity identifies it with the negative space rather than the pudenda itself. It is very much a “wedge” fitting perfectly into the vagina. Particularly within the context of its origins within the *Étant Donnés*, the *Wedge* has powerful parallels with the penis without being phallic in an overt or traditional fashion.

Along similar lines, the second component to this sculpture, the dental plastic that surrounds the *Wedge*, is a positive cast of the negative space surrounding the *Wedge*. No more vulval than the *Wedge* is phallic, the two pieces are nonetheless evocative of sexual intercourse. It is not merely the genital associations behind the two segments or the insertion of the *Wedge* into the fleshy dental plastic that is so sexually evocative, but the virtually seamless way in which they fit together. Each of the two elements is fundamentally a positive casting of a negative space. They are each solid, sculptural entities, the shape of which has been derived in response to its companion piece. It is this communion between the two elements, the dialogue between the two elements that creates a unified whole, which makes this a more passionate sculptural interpretation of the wedding vows.

Similarly, the *Wedge of Chastity* can be seen as the culmination of this set of erotic sculptures, particularly *Female Fig Leaf* and *Objet-dard*. While the two pieces from 1951 make explicit reference to both masculine and feminine sexuality, they exist in isolation. Duchamp famously asserted that “I believe in eroticism a lot, because it’s truly a rather widespread thing throughout the world, a thing everyone understands.”<sup>1066</sup> Eroticism is among the strongest themes running through the Duchampian oeuvre. Notoriously, however, this eroticism is profoundly frustrated. The masculine and the feminine exist only in isolation, eternally separated. These intertwined themes of eroticism and frustration are laid out most powerfully in the

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<sup>1066</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 88.

eternal sexual dance of his masterpiece, the *Large Glass*. *Wedge of Chastity* is arguably the first instance in Duchamp's work wherein the masculine and feminine meet in sexual union.

The appearance of *Wedge of Chastity* marked not only the marriage of Teeny and Marcel, but also the last of the by-products of the *Étant Donnés* that would ever appear. There is however, one other work that needs to be mentioned with regard to the development of the *Étant Donnés*. While neither a study for, nor a by product of *Étant Donnés*, the 1953 landscape, *Moonlight on the Bay at Basswood*, (figure 7.16) bears a strong connection with *Étant Donnés*.

As has already been mentioned, the third significant romance in Duchamp's life was his two decade long relationship and life-long friendship with Mary Reynolds. When in the spring of 1950, Mary Reynolds was admitted to hospital with a cancerous tumour in her womb, her brother Frank Brookes-Hubachek, urged Duchamp to return to Paris to be with her. Knowing how much their relationship meant to Mary, Hubachek even offered to pay for Duchamp's trans-Atlantic journey. Duchamp arrived in Paris on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, and remained with Mary until she slipped into a coma and died ten days later.

Within weeks of Duchamp's return to New York, a letter arrived from Hubachek informing Duchamp that a trust fund had been set up in his name. According to Hubachek, he was just putting the money he had inherited from his sister to a use she would have wanted: "She really had little property which was hers to dispose of because practically all of it was in trusts created by others, but it would have been possible for her to have expressed her feelings toward you by bequests of some amount. Being positive of this I shall do something to carry out her intentions."<sup>1067</sup> This trust, which paid between five and six thousand dollars each year, would revert to Hubachek's own children upon Duchamp's death.<sup>1068</sup> These

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<sup>1067</sup> Letter from Frank Brookes Hubachek to Marcel Duchamp, 16 December 1950, Hubachek family papers. Quoted in Tomkins, *Duchamp*, pp. 384-385.

<sup>1068</sup> \$5,000.000 in 1950 would have the approximate buying power of \$44,778.84 today. <<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>>.

payments were an immense boon to a man who, in his own words, had “developed parasitism to a fine art.”<sup>1069</sup>

The Hubachecks also invited Duchamp to spend time with them at their vacation home on Basswood Lake in northern Minnesota in the summer of 1953. It was here that Duchamp created *Moonlight on the Bay at Basswood* as a gesture of thanks to his host.<sup>1070</sup> Its composition is simple and elegant. On a mid-tone ground of blue blotter paper, appear the silhouettes of the White and Norway Red Pines native to Minnesota’s Canadian border.<sup>1071</sup> Not a wantonly selected scene, Duchamp has identified it as the sight which greeted him in the evening on the houseboat where he stayed during his visit.<sup>1072</sup> This portion of skyline was doubly resonant for its recipient, as it partially overlaps with a mural of the same skyline in Frank Brookes-Hubachek’s office.<sup>1073</sup>

At least partially in deference to the more conservative tastes of his host,<sup>1074</sup> this work is not merely more traditional in terms of genre, it is also more naturalistic in style and a more developed composition than much of Duchamp’s two-dimensional work of this period. Despite these conservative aspects, the work is by no means conventional. Much is made of the variegated materials employed within the work, and the subtle role of chance in its creation. According to Duchamp, “I did not have any painting instruments, I only had what I found around and used it...” Despite this,

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<sup>1069</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 384. This quote is attributed to Marcel Duchamp by William Copley.

<sup>1070</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 544, p. 802.

<sup>1071</sup> The identification of the breeds of trees is that of Mr. Frank Brookes-Hubachek. Letter from F. B. Hubachek to Anne d’Harnoncourt, 20 May 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1072</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 544, p. 802.

<sup>1073</sup> Letter from F. B. Hubachek to Anne d’Harnoncourt, 20 May 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. The scene in the mural, which includes the skyline extending to the left of that depicted in Duchamp’s painting, overlaps the two left most trees in Duchamp’s work.

<sup>1074</sup> In writing about *Moonlight* in a letter to Anne d’Harnoncourt, the features of the work that appear to impress him the most are the degree to which it resembles the mural of the same scene and the degree to which it resembles the skyline itself: “I have asked my superintendent at Basswood lake to photograph the remainder of the skyline to the right of that shown in the mural. This will give you an opportunity to compare the actual skyline with that in the major part of the drawing. It is my recollection that the drawing was a faithful reproduction of the actual skyline but I’m not positive of that.” Letter from F. B. Hubachek to Anne d’Harnoncourt, 20 May 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. More generally, Frank Brookes Hubachek’s daughter Marjorie Watkins recounted that “[He and Duchamp] used to talk about all kinds of modern art that Dad couldn’t understand...” Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 385.

Duchamp seems to have been extremely concerned about the work's survival.

Typewritten on the back of the work is the following message:

“This ‘painting’ by Marcel Duchamp depicts the rugged, ragged sky line of white pines at the west end of the bay at Basswood, where he was staying in a houseboat. At night a white mist arose from the water. The ‘painting’ is on the blotter of an ordinary correspondence pad. The trees were inked in by an ordinary fountain pen. The shadows in the water were made with an ordinary pencil. The moon and its reflection are by a child’s crayon. The white mist consists of Mennen’s talcom [*sic*] powder. The heavy brown shadows in the pine trees were made with a chocolate bar.”<sup>1075</sup>

Despite the ostensibly casual circumstances of its creation, the presence of this note provides some indication of Duchamp’s intentions for the work. Written in the third-person, this blurb bears a striking resemblance to the panels of text accompanying works on display in museums and the more extensive entries in catalogues. It is not for the benefit of Frank Hubachek that this information was included on the work itself, all of which could easily have been passed on to the recipient along with the work itself. Rather, the inclusion of this information indicates that Duchamp did not intend for the work to remain a private token of friendship and gratitude.

The timing of *Moonlight* is also auspicious. As has been mentioned, the body of the central nude figure in the *Étant Donnés* had almost certainly been completed by 1951. Thus, by 1953, Duchamp’s attention would most assuredly have been refocused upon the environment in which she lays. In his earlier studies, the upright placement of the nude figure obscured the left side of the field, and excused Duchamp from the necessity of considering that portion of the background in the *Étant Donnés*.

This is not to suggest that *Moonlight* was a preparatory study for the background of *Étant Donnés* in the same sense as the 1946 photograph of the waterfall at Chexbres. Rather, Duchamp’s ongoing concern for the *Étant Donnés* is discernable within this, the most developed composition produced concurrently with

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<sup>1075</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 544, p. 802.



the larger work of 1966. There are strong correlations between the two landscapes, including the relationship between the trees and sky, the trees and the placid, reflective water below, and the heavy, obfuscating mist that rises through the trees. These correlations prompted one art historian to observe that “the relationship of the drawing to the large work almost assumes the intimacy of a study.”<sup>1076</sup> Thus, it seems only appropriate that the background of the *Étant Donnés*, which began with the photograph taken in Chexbres when Mary and Duchamp were on vacation together for the final time, should find further inspiration in the view surrounding the childhood home of the woman with whom he had spent so much of his early life.

### **Not Seen or just Less Seen?**

As has been mentioned, the appearance of *Wedge of Chastity* in 1954 marked the end of the studies and sculptural works associated with the development of the *Étant Donnés*. The appearance of many of these studies and sculptures would come, retrospectively, to be identified as hints at the otherwise unacknowledged “secret” artwork. These were not however, the only hints at the work’s existence that would appear before Duchamp’s death.

It is important to note that, of the works and studies that have been mentioned thus far, only the sculptures were proliferated. This was presumably based on the assumption that the three dimensional works, shaped as they were by the negative spaces of the central figure, did not provide sufficient indication of the developing composition. Confident that the appearance of these works would not compromise the secrecy of his work, Duchamp not only presented them to friends, but arranged for them to be reproduced and sold as authorized editions.

The most famous of these were the editions produced by Duchamp’s dealer and cataloguer Arturo Schwarz. Schwarz, who would go on to reproduce a substantial portion of Duchamp’s sculptural oeuvre, reproduced the galvanized plaster *Objet-dard* as a series of eight bronzes in 1962.<sup>1077</sup> (figure 7.17) These were followed in 1963 by another series of eight bronzes, this time of *Wedge of Chastity*.<sup>1078</sup> (figure

<sup>1076</sup> D’Harnoncourt and Hopps, *Étant Donnés*, p. 26.

<sup>1077</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 542 (a), pp. 800-801.

<sup>1078</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 545, pp. 802-803.

7.18) Surprisingly, considering the personal nature of the work, *Wedge of Chastity* was also reproduced on two other occasions. The rough hewn plaster maquette Duchamp produced to aide in the moulding of the dental plastic was presented to Sacha Maruchess, a dental technician and fellow chess player who created the base for the original. (figure 7.19) In addition, only months before the Schwarz edition was produced, Mrs. Solomon Ethe commissioned the creation of a series of seven bronze casts of the *Wedge of Chastity*, though all but two were destroyed.<sup>1079</sup>

By far the most reproduced of the *Étant Donnés*-related works was the *Female Fig Leaf*. This piece, as has been mentioned, was the only one of the plaster objects for which there are two “originals,” one in galvanized plaster and one in painted plaster.<sup>1080</sup> Man Ray, one year after receiving the galvanized plaster “original,” produced an edition of ten painted plaster replicas. (figure 7.20) Yet another edition of ten, this time in bronze, was produced by the Galerie Rive Droite, Paris in 1961; making a total of twenty-two authorized replicas. (figure 7.21)

This was not the full extent of the reproduction and dissemination of this piece, however. In addition to its multiple three-dimensional reproductions, *Female Fig Leaf* was the only one of the *Étant Donnés*-related sculptures that Duchamp ever employed in his cover designs. For the cover of the first issue of André Breton’s periodical *Le Surréalisme, même*, in 1956, Duchamp had a photograph taken of the *Female Fig Leaf*, set upside down and lit in such a way that the final image appears inverted, as though it were a close-up of the positive pudenda from which the object was cast.<sup>1081</sup> (figure 7.22)

This is not to suggest, that the studies for the *Étant Donnés*, by contrast, were entirely secret and unknown. The accidental unveiling of the plaster study, *Le Gaz d’éclairage et la chute d’eau*, during the 1966 retrospective of Duchamp’s work at the Tate Gallery has already been mentioned. Even before this incident, both the initial drawing *Étant Donnés: Maria, la chute d’eau et le gaz d’éclairage* and the second

<sup>1079</sup> After the casting was complete, Duchamp was displeased with the results and requested that the whole run be destroyed. While Mrs. Ethe complied, she retained two examples for herself. Ibid., no. 545 (b), p. 803.

<sup>1080</sup> Ibid., no. 536 & 536 (a), p. 797.

<sup>1081</sup> Ibid., no. 548, p.805. Taylor, ‘Eros Triumphant,’ in *Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia*, ed. by Mundy, p. 160.

study in plaster, *Le Gaz d'éclairage et la chute d'eau* had been included in Robert Lebel's monograph *Sur Marcel Duchamp*, though without illustration.<sup>1082</sup>

This was not the only instance in which the central figure of the *Étant Donnés* would appear publicly prior to Duchamp's death. Only a few months before Duchamp's death in 1968 Arturo Schwarz published the second volume of a collection of new etchings by Duchamp under the title, *The Large Glass and Related Works*. While the first volume, published in 1965 had been illustrated with etchings by Duchamp of various details of the *Large Glass*, the second volume was illustrated with a series of nine etchings on the theme of "The Lovers." Among these nine is one with the title, *The Bec Auer*.<sup>1083</sup> (figure 7.23) While most of the etchings take a clear inspiration either from famous works from art history, including Ingres's *Turkish Bath* and Rodin's *The Kiss*, or from Duchamp's own early work, the scene within *The Bec Auer* would have been unfamiliar to anyone who had not yet seen the *Étant Donnés*.

Within the text, Schwarz described the origins of the then mysterious etching, *The Bec Auer*, as follows:

Three different iconographical sources can be found in this etching. The first, which gives the etching its title, is the *bec auer* – a special type of gas lamp which the woman in the etching is holding. This lamp can be seen in one of Duchamp's earliest drawing[s]. (figure 7.24) The man lying on his back is modeled upon an advertisement, and the nude woman derives from still another source.<sup>1084</sup>

This 'other source,' about which no more is said, is undeniably the central figure from the *Étant Donnés*; her legs are similarly splayed and she holds aloft the same eponymous lamp. Within the etching, however, Duchamp has chosen not to frame the post-coital scene as he had both in the finished work and in early studies. Despite this, the anonymity of the central figure is still retained, with her face obscured by the man's raised elbow as the two angle themselves to better see one another.

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<sup>1082</sup> Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, no. 186 & 222, p. 175 & 190. *Étant Donnés: Maria, la chute d'eau et le gaz d'éclairage* (no. 186) was included in the original catalogue published in 1959, and *Le Gaz d'éclairage et la chute d'eau* (no. 222) was added in the second edition, published in 1967.

<sup>1083</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 648, p. 876.

<sup>1084</sup> Arturo Schwarz, *Marcel Duchamp: The Lovers: Nine Original Etchings for 'The Large Glass and Related Works'*, Vol. II, (Milan: Galleria Schwarz, 1967), p. 6.

Considering the number of available references to the *Étant Donnés*, particularly those offered by Duchamp himself, it is difficult, in retrospect, to imagine how this work came to be identified as “secret.” Along similar lines, it seems incredible, regardless of Duchamp’s possible secretive intentions, that a work of the scale and intricacy of the *Étant Donnés* could be kept a secret for over two decades. When the work was initiated in 1946, Duchamp could have assumed a certain amount of privacy, though as his renown grew the maintenance of that privacy would have become ever more difficult.

Underpinning the assertions that Duchamp maintained a veil of secrecy around the *Étant Donnés* is, first and foremost, the fact that he never mentioned the work in any of the nearly 70 interviews that he gave between the start of the work in 1946, through to his death in 1968. Moreover, while he maintained a series of studios during this period, he was never interviewed in them, nor was he ever photographed within a studio environment. Rather, when the environs of an interview were divulged, they were almost always revealed to have been held in the apartment he shared with Teeny at 327 East 58<sup>th</sup> Street.

As I have stated, Duchamp never lied in the course of any of his interviews. With regard to the development of the *Étant Donnés*, though, he never had to. Over the course of twenty-two years of interviews, Duchamp never offered information about the work with which he was engaged, but by the same token, he was never asked. Duchamp’s legendary status as a dilettante was such as to preclude interviewers from asking what he might be working on at that moment. Instead, interviewers would ask questions such as: “if you’ve done nothing since 1923, what have you lived on?”<sup>1085</sup> or “You were... a legendary figure in the art world, and then suddenly, your quit painting! *Why?*”<sup>1086</sup> Taking Duchamp’s retirement as a given, Duchamp was capable of providing such honest, yet wholly uninformative answers as: “I didn’t make any hard and fast resolutions at all, of any kind. I simply stopped because I didn’t have anything more to say at the time.”<sup>1087</sup> and “I myself haven’t

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<sup>1085</sup> Steegmuller, ‘Duchamp: Fifty Years Later,’ p. 29.

<sup>1086</sup> Sawelson-Gorse, ‘On the Hot Seat,’ p. 43.

<sup>1087</sup> Antoine, ‘Interview with Marcel Duchamp,’ p. 16.

given up painting, I'm just not painting now, but if I have an idea tomorrow I will do it.”<sup>1088</sup>

The only instance of anyone actually suspecting the existence of the *Étant Donnés* was Walter Hopps's query of Duchamp prior to the opening of his first retrospective in 1963. Hopps claimed to have been struck by a sense of absence when looking over Duchamp's assembled oeuvre. Duchamp's polite but firm response, that “If there were such a work that I was working on in secret, this would not be the occasion where it would have been shown,” put an end to Hopps's inquiries.<sup>1089</sup>

There is one other ex post facto account of contemporaneous knowledge of the *Étant Donnés*, which comes from an American painter named Robert Barnes. Barnes was working in New York during the 1950s, where he made the acquaintance of several prominent Surrealists, including Matta, who introduced Barnes to Duchamp. According to Barnes, Duchamp asked him to drive to Trenton, New Jersey to collect a pigskin that Duchamp had purchased in order to mend the cracks developing in the torso of the central figure.<sup>1090</sup> In addition to running this potentially innocuous errand, Barnes also recalls having occasionally visited the studio wherein the *Étant Donnés* was being created, though he “didn't focus on much of it then.”<sup>1091</sup>

By Barnes's account, Duchamp was not as concerned with the secrecy of the *Étant Donnés* as he is generally supposed to have been. “Lots of people knew about it. I don't know what this great mystery is. I am sure that Matta knew about it. And if Matta knew about it, everyone in the world knew about it. Matta was a bigger blabbermouth than I was.”<sup>1092</sup> Barnes elaborated, saying, “that's the thing, everyone

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<sup>1088</sup> Anon., ‘Be Shocking,’ p. 42.

<sup>1089</sup> ‘Excerpts from the West Coast Duchamp Symposium,’ (Appendix C), *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. by Clearwater, p. 121. A similar version of this exchange occurs in Walter Hopps, ‘Gimme Strength: Joseph Cornell and Marcel Duchamp Remembered,’ in *Joseph Cornell/Marcel Duchamp ...in resonance*, ed. by Paul Winkler & Anne d'Harnoncourt, (Cantz, 1999), p. 75.

<sup>1090</sup> Thomas Girst, ‘A Very Normal Guy: An Interview with Robert Barnes on Marcel Duchamp and *Étant Donnés*,’ *ToutFait.com: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal* <<http://www.toutfait.com/duchamp.jsp?postid=1193&keyword=etant%20donnes>> [accessed 28 December 2007].

<sup>1091</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1092</sup> Ibid.

sort of knew about this thing and most people hated it and thought it was a waste of time.”<sup>1093</sup>

Adding to this image of the *Étant Donnés* as hidden in plain sight, are the accounts of Duchamp’s move between studios in the first months of 1966. As the work was reaching its attributed date of completion, Duchamp was forced to vacate his studio at 210 West 14<sup>th</sup> Street when the building was sold. This fourth-floor studio had been Duchamp’s home until he and Teeny moved into Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning’s apartment in 1953. Following that move, he maintained his 14<sup>th</sup> Street apartment as a studio, workshop and home for the emerging *Étant Donnés*. The sale of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street building created unforeseen problems for the *Étant Donnés*, as the entire work had to be dismantled and moved to a new studio at 80 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street, roughly five blocks away. Presumably due to the proximity of the new studio to the old, Duchamp decided to transport the elements of the *Étant Donnés* to their new home by hand. According to accounts of this move, despite meeting several people he knew in the trips between studios, no one asked any questions regarding the strange objects he carried back and forth.<sup>1094</sup>

While one may question these accounts, appearing so long after the public unveiling of the *Étant Donnés*, they are given credibility by the surprising level of accuracy of the rumours that circulated prior to the work’s unveiling. Following Duchamp’s death, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Cassandra Foundation had maintained heightened security around the piece. As soon as the work could be safely dismantled and transported to Philadelphia, it was stored under lock and key, with access only granted to specific individuals.<sup>1095</sup> All parties involved had decided that any advance publicity surrounding the unveiling of the *Étant Donnés* would be “rudely antagonistic to the spirit of the composition.”<sup>1096</sup> Thus, the only information regarding their newest acquisition that the PMA released prior to the unveiling of the

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<sup>1093</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1094</sup> Gough-Cooper & Caumont, *Ephemerides on an About Marcel Duchamp*, n.p. [31 March 1968].

<sup>1095</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Mr. Huntington Block, 20 February 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1096</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Madame Duchamp and Mr. [William] Copley, 28 January 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

work was carefully worded such that it “accepts the existence of the object but does not give any information.”<sup>1097</sup>

Despite the precautions taken to prevent advance knowledge of the work being leaked, a conversation between the PMA’s director Evan Turner and the senior art critic of *The New York Times*, John Canaday, revealed the accuracy of rumours surrounding the still hidden work. “I found when I talked to him he knew a ~~very~~ [sic] great deal about the piece but one or two essential details he did not know.”<sup>1098</sup> While there is no account of exactly which details Canaday was and was not aware of, this half-knowledge and casual awareness of the *Étant Donnés* is commensurate with the various accounts that have come to light in later years.

As such, it appears as though Duchamp understood that an active attempt to hide a work the size and scale of the *Étant Donnés* over the course of two decades was not likely to succeed. In all probability, the only thing that would have been accomplished by an attempt to maintain complete secrecy would have been to arouse suspicion and curiosity regarding his work. Instead he chose a more strategic and more passive secrecy. By not drawing any unnecessary attention to the work or his activities, Duchamp allowed apathy, self-interest and preconceived notions about his career to ward off any potential curiosity.

The secrecy of the *Étant Donnés*, thus, had rather less to do with who explicitly knew about the work, or was aware of its existence, but instead with who didn’t know about it. Despite a potentially large number of individuals who may have been aware of the work to one extent or another, there were three important entities that were necessarily kept in the dark: the press, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Arturo Schwarz. As has already been mentioned, the “cherished”<sup>1099</sup> myth of Duchamp’s retirement and the romantic notion of the artist as dilettante proved more than sufficient to preclude questions about his contemporaneous activities. All that

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<sup>1097</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Mr. [Barnett] Hodes, 6 February, 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1098</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Madame Duchamp, 26 June 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1099</sup> Barbara Gold, ‘Duchamp Explodes a Myth,’ *The Sun*, 27 July 1969, n.p. A copy is held in Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

proved necessary to keep the *Étant Donnés* a secret from the journalists and interviewers he encountered was simply not to mention the work.

Keeping knowledge of the work from the Philadelphia Museum of Art was a simpler proposition. Following the installation of the Arensberg collection in 1954, Duchamp's contact with the museum was limited. Beyond the occasional loan petition, and the re-hanging of the Arensberg collection in 1961, there was little need for Duchamp to communicate with the museum, and thus little danger of divulging the existence of the *Étant Donnés*. What did have to be ensured, however, was the room in which the *Étant Donnés* was eventually to be installed.

When Duchamp began work on the *Étant Donnés* in 1946, his long term plans for the work would necessarily have been limited. While the bulk of his oeuvre was already in the Arensbergs' collection, the couple were far from finalizing the plans for the disposition of their collection. Thus, any desire to have the completed work reside with the remainder of the oeuvre Duchamp had so carefully shepherded into the Arensbergs' possession would have been contingent upon future events that were not entirely within his control. Presumably aware of this, Duchamp's efforts were focused upon the central nude figure until 1954. He does not seem to have turned to the actual construction of the environmental portion of the *Étant Donnés* until after the fate of the Arensberg collection had been sealed.

Throughout the period during which Duchamp acted as go-between for the Arensbergs and the PMA, the ultimate destination of the *Étant Donnés* must have weighed heavily on his mind. The effect of such concern can be most readily seen in the placement of the *Large Glass* amongst the Arensberg collection. When the collection was finally hung, the smaller rooms in the end of the museum's north wing were devoted to the works of those artists who were prominently represented within the Arensbergs' collection. Rather than display the *Large Glass* within a gallery devoted to Duchamp's own works, the *Large Glass* was made the centrepiece of one of the three large galleries in which the highlights of the Arensbergs' collection were hung.



As has already been discussed, the placement of the *Large Glass* within the largest of the rooms devoted to the Arensberg collection was a calculated decision on Duchamp's part. Duchamp had an unprecedented level of input into the layout and hanging of the galleries that housed the Arensberg collection, and the strategic placement of the *Large Glass* was among the most portentous features of the hanging of that collection. The decision to anchor the work into the floor and cut a door in the wall behind it, made the *Large Glass* a permanent fixture within both the Arensberg collection and the museum's larger collection of modern art, and prefigured the later devotion of that room entirely to Duchamp's work.

In so steadfastly ensuring the permanent placement of the *Large Glass*, Duchamp also ensured the availability of two narrow, windowless rooms positioned immediately on either side of the *Large Glass* as potential locations for the *Étant Donnés*.<sup>1100</sup> As Duchamp did not begin developing the environment of the *Étant Donnés* until after 1954, he was able to tailor the physical necessities of housing the work to the spaces available within the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Thus, the work, which requires roughly three meters by just over one meter of floor space, could be easily ensconced within either of the two neighbouring galleries. Such placement would force a juxtaposition between and inevitable comparison of the *Étant Donnés* and the *Large Glass*, already established as the masterpiece of Duchamp's oeuvre.

Ultimately, keeping the existence of the *Étant Donnés* a secret from the press and the Philadelphia Museum of Art presented a comparatively small obstacle. The most significant individual from whom the existence of *Étant Donnés* was kept a secret was his cataloguer and dealer, Arturo Schwarz. Schwarz made the acquaintance of Duchamp in the early 1950s, beginning a relationship that Schwarz himself describes as friendly rather than professional.<sup>1101</sup> Despite the appearance of the *catalogue raisonné, Sur Marcel Duchamp*, in 1959, the following year Schwarz began work on an even more extensive catalogue of Duchamp's work. Moreover, it was under the auspices of the Schwarz Gallery that the series of authorized replicas of

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<sup>1100</sup> In the original hanging of the Arensberg Collection, these two neighboring galleries were exclusively devoted to the work of Marcel Duchamp to the west, and Wassily Kandinsky to the east, the gallery in which the *Étant Donnés* would ultimately reside. See figure 3.25, *Plan of Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1959*.

<sup>1101</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 260.

Duchamp's readymades and small sculptural objects was created and sold, the only arrangement with a commercial gallery into which Duchamp ever entered.

One would have assumed, by virtue of at least one of these relationships, that Schwarz would have been among the inner circle of individuals who were granted full access to the *Étant Donnés*. Instead, Schwarz was kept entirely in the dark about the very existence of the work until five months after Duchamp's death. He wasn't even allowed advance access to the piece, and had to make do with being among the very first of the general public to see the work at its public unveiling.<sup>1102</sup>

Schwarz's uninformed position was decidedly not accidental. His roles as Duchamp's cataloguer, and to some extent biographer, make the fact that he was not privy to any of the information regarding the *Étant Donnés* all the more striking. In his role as cataloguer, at least, Schwarz would have had greater licence to query the existence of unpublished works, sketches and studies than virtually anyone else. Thus, maintaining the work as a secret from Schwarz was not, as it had been with the press and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, simply a case of not volunteering information.

While it is true that Duchamp did not lie to any of his interviewers, he came closer to lying to Schwarz than to anyone else. In compiling Duchamp's life's work Schwarz was not, as Hopps has claimed to be, struck by a sense of absence. Rather, it was through inquiring about the study *Le Gaz d'Éclairage et la Chute d'Eau* that Schwarz got as close as he ever would to asking Duchamp about the work for which this was a study. According to Schwarz:

When the existence of *Étant donnés* was still a secret,[sic] Duchamp told this author that the figure in *Le Gaz d'éclairage et la chute de eau* was that of the Bride in the *Large Glass*, 1915-23..., finally unclothed and treated in *trompe l'oeil* fashion.<sup>1103</sup>

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<sup>1102</sup> Schwarz was credited as such by Evan Turner. Patricia Boyd Wilson, 'Duchamp Nude Triples Art Museum Attendance,' *Evening Bulletin (Philadelphia)*, 15 July 1969, sec. B, p. 11. That he didn't see the work until after the public unveiling is attested to in a letter from Evan Turner to Alexina Duchamp, 7 July 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1103</sup> Schwarz, *Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, no. 531, p. 794. Schwarz has claimed that this information was provided during "unpublished interviews, 1959-68."

While Schwarz does not record the question that prompted Duchamp to make this statement, it remains a telling indication of Duchamp's desire to keep Schwarz in the dark about the *Étant Donnés*. As the only one of the four studies for the central figure to appear in the first edition of the catalogue, and the only one to be exhibited publicly before the unveiling of the *Étant Donnés* itself, we can safely assume that this statement was not made until 1966 or later.<sup>1104</sup> Thus, the work was not only underway, but effectively completed by the time Schwarz's interest in the study was piqued. Duchamp actively chose not to acknowledge the existence of the larger work in his response to Schwarz. Duchamp's answer to Schwarz not only lacked the faintest hint of an acknowledgement of the *Étant Donnés*' existence, it went further to imply that *Le Gaz d'Éclairage et la Chute d'Eau* was an end in itself rather than a step within the larger development of an idea. In compensation for keeping him in the dark, however, Duchamp's statement to Schwarz constitutes his only public commentary upon the *Étant Donnés*.

Many have suggested that Duchamp kept the existence of the *Étant Donnés* a secret from Schwarz because Duchamp "did not, in the French way, trust him."<sup>1105</sup> Others have posited that Duchamp placed little value in Schwarz's work and, "spared himself by not reading it. Instead, he would just turn to the last page, jot something like, 'Very interesting,' sign his name and send it back."<sup>1106</sup> Whether this characterization of the relationship between Duchamp and Schwarz is accurate or not, there is another factor that must have held sway when Duchamp made this decision. By obscuring the existence of the *Étant Donnés* from Schwarz, as with all other cultural mediators, he ensured a revisitation and reconsideration of his oeuvre once the *Étant Donnés* was unveiled.

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<sup>1104</sup> Prior to the appearance of *Le Gaz d'éclairage et la chute de eau* in the exhibition and catalogue of the 1966 exhibition "The Almost Complete works of Marcel Duchamp," held at the Tate Gallery there was no public record of the work's existence. It had never been exhibited, there were neither descriptions nor known photographs of it available, and it had not yet been included in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Robert Lebel's catalogue raisonné on the artist.

<sup>1105</sup> Molly Nesbit, 'Schwarz Shrift: The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp, 2 vol., 3<sup>d</sup> rev. ed.,' *Artforum International*, 37 (April 1998), pp. 9-10 (p. 9).

<sup>1106</sup> This quote is attributed to Duchamp's step-son, Pierre Matisse in Jeffrey Hogrefe, 'Duchamp Scholars Face off in Art in America Hate Mail,' *New York Observer*, 11 January 1999. A similar belief has been expressed by Francis M. Naumann, 'Arturo's Marcel: The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp,' *Art in America*, 86 (January 1998), pp. 35-39.

If the initial edition of Schwarz's catalogue had been published prior to Duchamp's death, and subsequently the *Étant Donnés* had not been included, it would still have been the most extensive catalogue of Duchamp's work. Listing 420 items (421 after the last minute discovery of the *Étant Donnés*) the catalogue contained more than double the 208 entries that appeared in Lebel's 1959 catalogue. For all of this, however, the publishing of a newer edition of the catalogue would have been necessitated by the appearance of this final and secret work. Schwarz was, in fact, ultimately able to add an extensive essay on the *Étant Donnés* at the last minute, though it had to appear in the second volume of the *catalogue raisonné*.<sup>1107</sup> Regardless, he still opted to publish a second edition of the catalogue less than a year later so that the lengthy entry on the work could be moved to the first volume of the catalogue, devoted to a critical analysis of Duchamp's life and work.<sup>1108</sup>

Schwarz's experience with the *Étant Donnés* was, to a degree, reflected in the experience of the art world at large. Just as Duchamp must have appreciated that the posthumous unveiling of this work would necessitate a newer, more complete edition of existing catalogues raisonné, he must also have realized that the posthumous appearance of a critically unknown work would necessitate a re-evaluation of his own life and career. Likewise, Duchamp could reasonably have assumed that the notion of a "secret work," and the aura of mystery surrounding a twenty year clandestine operation, would further increase or re-invigorate interest in his life and work. The notion of a mysterious secret work would also provide a physical draw; a must-see-work, ideally housed amongst the remainder of his oeuvre, prompting attempts to place the new work within the context of the old.

In order for the desired posthumous re-evaluation and continued re-invigoration of his career to occur, the *Étant Donnés* needed to remain a secret during Duchamp's life. The primary, practical reason for maintaining this veil of secrecy

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<sup>1107</sup> Due to the fact that the printing of the catalogue had been scheduled for April, Schwarz wrote the entire five page entry on the *Étant Donnés* in the five-day span between the unveiling of the work on 7 July, and his departure from New York on 11 July, a mere three months prior to the date on which the printing of the catalogue was set to begin. Letter from Arturo Schwarz to Evan H. Turner, 6 March 1969 & letter from Evan H. Turner to Madame Duchamp, 8 July 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1108</sup> The text remains, largely unaltered, as chapter XVII, Volume 1, in the fifth and most recent edition of the catalogue. Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, revised and expanded paperback edition (New York: Delano Greenidge, 2000).

was that the posthumous unveiling of the work needed to be shocking. More important even than the shock of the work's erotic imagery, the shock of the very existence of the work and its status as secret were the source of public fascination with the *Étant Donnés*. The second and parallel reason for maintaining the secrecy of the *Étant Donnés* is that doing so exempted Duchamp from providing commentary upon the work. Had the press, the PMA or Schwarz been aware of the existence of the work they would have hounded him for information and explanation.

With characteristic prescience, Duchamp grasped that the contemporaneous and historical reception of the work would be determined entirely by the art world. He understood that institutions such as the press, museums, dealers and academia function as cultural mediators and that it is they who are the "posterity" who "give a final verdict and sometimes rehabilitates forgotten artists."<sup>1109</sup> Thus, it was they for whom the secrecy of the *Étant Donnés* was most important. By maintaining the work as a secret from the press, the PMA and Arturo Schwarz, Duchamp could ensure that the work would be remembered as a secret, the aura of mystery surrounding the work would remain and Duchamp would have the last laugh.

### **Finally Seen: the Posthumous Unveiling**

At the time of Marcel Duchamp's death in 1968, unfettered access to the work was limited to, at the least, two individuals. The first and, most natural, of the two was Duchamp's wife Teeny. While it has been reported that she found the *Étant Donnés* to be distasteful, her influence upon the final appearance of the work is palpable.<sup>1110</sup> Amongst other things, she is frequently recounted as having helped her husband gather bricks for the punctured wall from construction sites throughout Greenwich Village.<sup>1111</sup> The bed of twigs upon which the central nude figure rests is likewise credited as having been gathered by Marcel and Teeny while on evening walks at Teeny's New Jersey farm.<sup>1112</sup> Photographs even show her posing outside of the Spanish door that would ultimately be incorporated into the *Étant Donnés*, and

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<sup>1109</sup> Duchamp, 'The Creative Act'; in *Marchand du Sel*, ed. by Sanouillet and Peterson, p. 138.

<sup>1110</sup> Naumann, 'Marcel & Maria,' p. 108.

<sup>1111</sup> Ibid., pp. 108-109. Gough-Cooper & Caumont, *Ephemerides on an About Marcel Duchamp*, n.p. [31 March 1968].

<sup>1112</sup> Gough-Cooper & Caumont, *Ephemerides on an About Marcel Duchamp*, n.p. [31 March 1968].

demonstrating the lifting and placing of the central nude figure. (figure 7.25) There does not appear to have been any aspect of the creation of the *Étant Donnés* during the course of her marriage to Duchamp with which she was not involved, or at least aware.

The second person to have access to this work, and even possession of the work in some sense, was the artist and millionaire William Copley. Copley was a great admirer and collector of Duchamp's work.<sup>1113</sup> Their friendship led Duchamp to accept a position as a director within Copley's charitable organization, The William and Noma Copley Foundation.<sup>1114</sup> According to one account, it was at the suggestion and encouragement of Duchamp that the Copley Foundation changed its name in the mid 1960s to the Cassandra Foundation.<sup>1115</sup>

The friendship between Duchamp and Copley, genuine though it was, does not appear to be exceptional. Thus, it is difficult to understand why Duchamp chose Copley as the only other person to whom the existence and nature of the *Étant Donnés* was divulged. Copley was not only permitted to see the work, but in the early spring of 1968 he took possession of the work and the only other key to the room in which it was housed.<sup>1116</sup> There is a striking lack of information about the nature of this acquisition, and by extension the details of the legal and practical relationship between William Copley, the Cassandra Foundation and the *Étant Donnés*. All that is known is that the work was not willed by Duchamp to either the Cassandra

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<sup>1113</sup> In addition to temporarily possessing *Étant Donnés*, its instruction manual, and, as noted earlier, Richard Hamilton's replica of the *Large Glass*, William Copley owned at least five other works by Duchamp. These included the painting *Nude With Black Stockings* of 1910 (Schwarz, no. 182), the readymade *Pharmacy* of 1914 (Schwarz, no. 283), *Brawl at Austerlitz* of 1921 (Schwarz, no. 397), the set of *Disks Inscribed with Puns* (Schwarz, no. 415, 417-423), and the deluxe *Boîte-en-Valise* numbered XV/XX.

<sup>1114</sup> Even nine months after his death, he is listed third on the letterhead of the foundation, following William and Noma themselves. Letter from Barnett Hodes (secretary-treasurer of the Cassandra Foundation) to Evan Turner, 1 July 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1115</sup> James Metcalf, 'The Gift of Cassandra,' *Tout-Fait.com: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal*, <[http://www.toutfait.com/online\\_journal\\_details.php?postid=1159](http://www.toutfait.com/online_journal_details.php?postid=1159)> [accessed 9 November 2006].

<sup>1116</sup> These arrangements were identified as occurring "[s]ometime prior to [Duchamp's] departure for Europe th[e] summer [of 1968]," in *Marcel Duchamp*, ed. by D'Harnoncourt and McShine, pp. 30-31. With implausible specificity, Gough-Cooper and Caumont have identified this transfer as having occurred on 31 March 1968, in *Ephemerides on an About Marcel Duchamp*, n.p. [31 March 1968]. Copley affirmed that he had relinquished his key in a letter from William Copley to Evan H. Turner, 30 January 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

Foundation or William Copley, and, as it was the foundation that donated the *Étant Donnés* to the PMA, the work was in their possession after Duchamp's death.

In light of this paucity of information and the rarity with which Duchamp allowed individuals such complete access to this work, one feels compelled to ask what role Duchamp envisioned Copley and the Cassandra Foundation playing with regard to the *Étant Donnés*.<sup>1117</sup> The jobs that the foundation did perform include participating in the negotiations regarding the details surrounding the transferral, display and reproduction of the work and the publicity that would surround it. The foundation further covered the cost of insuring the *Étant Donnés* to the value of \$150,000 against vandalism and damage from February through the end of June of 1969.<sup>1118</sup> This does not provide a clearer idea of why Copley and the Cassandra Foundation were included in the process however, as all but the insurance was undertaken by Teeny as well.

While in both an official and legal sense, the *Étant Donnés* was the "Gift of the Cassandra Foundation,"<sup>1119</sup> the letter of thanks and acceptance drafted by Evan Turner on behalf of the PMA was addressed to Teeny Duchamp, with a copy sent to William Copley.<sup>1120</sup> Though neither Teeny nor Copley aided in the physical transferral of the work from New York to the PMA, the private contractor hired for this purpose was Teeny's son, Paul Matisse. Additionally, clause seven of the "memorandum of agreement" between the Cassandra Foundation and the PMA requires that the "Museum will exercise its best efforts to consult the wishes of Mrs. Marcel Duchamp in respect to the maintenance and exhibition of 'Étant

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<sup>1117</sup> I have sought an answer to this question in potential correspondence between Duchamp and Copley to no avail. As has been mentioned elsewhere, there is no correspondence within the Alexina and Marcel Duchamp papers in Philadelphia. I have sought a similar archive for the Copley or Cassandra Foundation correspondence with only limited success. There is a William and Noma Copley Foundation Archive at the Getty Center, though there is no communication between Copley and Duchamp contained therein regarding the *Étant Donnés*.

<sup>1118</sup> The insurance policy with Huntington T. Block insurers began on 6 February 1969, and concluded on 30 June 1969. Letter from William Copley to Evan Turner, 5 February 1969; & letter from Lois B Craig to Barnett Hodes, 1 July 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1119</sup> This is how the Philadelphia Museum of Art's donor information for the *Étant Donnés* is phrased.

<sup>1120</sup> Letter from Evan Turner to Madame Duchamp, 20 January 1969 (A carbon copy of this letter with an additional cover letter was sent to William Copley on the same date). Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

Donne.’[sic]”<sup>1121</sup> No equivalent requirements were included regarding Copley or the Cassandra Foundation.

Ultimately, covering the cost of insuring *Étant Donnés* was the only contribution of Copley and the Cassandra Foundation, one which hardly required legal possession of the work. There was no legal need for the work to pass into the possession of a third party while ownership was transferred from Marcel and Teeny to the PMA, nor was there any financial benefit to doing so. Duchamp, having been deeply involved in the donation of the Arensberg collection to the PMA and the dispersal of the Dreier collection, would undoubtedly have been aware of this. Thus, the most plausible reason for placing the *Étant Donnés* in the possession of the Cassandra Foundation, with the express intent that they then donate it to the PMA, is that Duchamp still harboured concerns that the PMA would not accept his work.

Possibly still discomfited by the rejection of Katherine Dreier’s collection, and aware that the contractual minimum display period of twenty-five years had not yet passed, Duchamp was not yet convinced of the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s commitment to his legacy. Even before his experiences with the dispositions of the Dreier and Arensberg collections Duchamp had expressed a similar mistrust of museums and the capricious whims of the public they serve. Even though his *Large Glass* was cemented into the floor with a door cut into the wall to correspond with the work, Duchamp was still not convinced even of its permanence. As he pointed out to one interviewer, “in twelve or thirteen [years] it might all go down into the storeroom or the basement!”<sup>1122</sup>

Thus, the implied role of the Cassandra Foundation was as a temporary repository for the work should the trustees of the Philadelphia Museum of Art refuse to accept it. As a grant awarding body, with neither an independent collection nor a history of storing or dealing in art, the Cassandra Foundation was not an obvious choice for this role. However, Duchamp trusted Copley as the head of the foundation to take on the legal and financial burden of alternate arrangements should they have

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<sup>1121</sup> Memorandum of agreement between the Cassandra Foundation and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1122</sup> Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 87.



become necessary. Thus, through the Cassandra Foundation, Duchamp was able to ensure the care and future housing of his creation, regardless of the response from Philadelphia, thus sparing his widow from any potential burden.

Fortunately for Duchamp and his legacy, the Executive Committee of the PMA unanimously voted to accept the *Étant Donnés* in their first meeting of the New Year.<sup>1123</sup> Expecting such a response, discussions and arrangements regarding the work had begun more than a month earlier. Chief among these arrangements was an assessment of the construction itself. While the work had been seen before, few of those who had seen it were granted full access to the work, and none of those with unfettered access were particularly skilled in either construction or electrical wiring. Fortunately, Teeny's son, the artist and inventor Paul Matisse possessed the necessary knowledge and skills, and was recruited to assist the PMA in assessing the potential pitfalls in transporting the *Étant Donnés*.<sup>1124</sup>

As has already been stated, Duchamp gave a great deal of consideration to ensuring the life of the *Étant Donnés* after his own had ended. The degree to which Duchamp carried these considerations is evident in the fact that almost all of the potential pitfalls of transporting and housing the work had been worked out, either within the work itself or within the accompanying illustrated instruction manual. Among the few potential sources of difficulty perceived by Paul Matisse, almost all relate to the exceptionally complex electrical wiring with which Duchamp appears to have not sought any assistance. As his step-son described it: "the wiring is a work of art in its own right, but at some day an insurance company man will discover it."<sup>1125</sup>

Most of the electrical difficulties presented by the work stemmed from the incredible variety of lighting that Duchamp insisted upon within the piece. (figure 7.26) Thus, the majority of the proposed alterations involved including timers and fuses within the wiring, and a thermostat to ensure against the possibility of overheating and fire. Given the specificity of the lighting within the piece, Paul

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<sup>1123</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Madame Duchamp, 20 January 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1124</sup> Letter from Paul Matisse to Madame Duchamp, 11 December 1968. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. Paul Matisse was an artist and inventor in his own right who had developed the Kalliroscope.

<sup>1125</sup> Ibid.

Matisse also proposed the addition of an “electric rug,” which would switch on all of the work’s electrical components as each visitor approached the work.<sup>1126</sup> This alteration, necessary to prevent the electrical components from overheating, is the only one which altered the experience of the viewing the piece, however minimally. In order for the proposed electric rug to be successful, the entire visible floor of gallery had to be carpeted, marking the space off from the polished wood floor of the neighbouring gallery.

There was, in effect, only one non-electrical concern raised, that regarding the accumulation of dust on the work and the regulation of humidity within the piece. Those two problems, with which Duchamp had struggled for more than a decade,<sup>1127</sup> were solved by the relatively simple solution of sealing the room in which the work was installed.<sup>1128</sup> Thus, sandwiched between the two removes of the punctured brick wall and the perforated door is a third, albeit completely transparent, remove. This addition, a large glass door protects the nude and her environment from contaminants, and draws parallels ever closer to her predecessor in the *Large Glass*.

In all other respects, the *Étant Donnés* was installed in Philadelphia almost exactly as it was in Duchamp’s studio in room 403 at 80 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>1129</sup> Paul Matisse even recalled replicating some of Duchamp’s more idiosyncratic, though less dangerous, engineering decisions. When reassembling the rotating disk that produces the effect of flowing water in the background, Matisse noted that Duchamp had decided to merely rest the perforated disk onto the screw that caused it to rotate, rather than fastening it to the screw. This caused the disk to rotate at a slightly inconsistent rate, slipping and pausing occasionally on the screw. Observing that the disk should not have been able to rotate just by resting on the screw, and that it would have been

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<sup>1126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1127</sup> Duchamp’s acquisition of pigskin to mend cracks that had developed on the torso of the central nude figure has already been mentioned. Later attempts to prevent her over-drying included Duchamp covering the figure with a plastic bag and hanging her in the closet with an electric heater while he went on vacation. Gough-Cooper & Caumont, *Ephemerides on an About Marcel Duchamp*, n.p. [31 March 1958].

<sup>1128</sup> Letter from Paul Matisse to Madame Duchamp, 11 December 1968. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1129</sup> During the early stages of the correspondence regarding the *Étant Donnés*, the piece was regularly referred to as “403” rather than by its title.

an easy task to fasten it to the screw, Paul Matisse opted to reconstruct the mechanism as he found it in Duchamp's studio.<sup>1130</sup>

Due to Duchamp's otherwise meticulous instructions and planning, and the aforementioned alterations suggested by Paul Matisse, the work was moved from Duchamp's studio to the PMA with a minimum of difficulty. While the physical arrangements for the piece were underway, William Copley, Teeny Duchamp and Evan Turner, the director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, were engaged in a three-way discussion regarding the conditions and restrictions to be placed upon the work. In stark contrast to the care he took to avoid any error or confusion regarding the physical care of the *Étant Donnés*, there is no written record of Duchamp's desires regarding its institutional care. He instead appears to have expected Teeny, and to a lesser extent Copley, to ensure that his wishes would be carried out. Thus, a number of conditions were placed upon the work, though it is unclear how important any of these conditions may have been to Duchamp, himself.

Among the more conventional or expected restrictions placed upon the work was the guarantee to keep the *Étant Donnés* on display for at least fifteen years, and that the work would never "be permitted to leave the premises of the Museum on loan or otherwise."<sup>1131</sup> Less conventionally, the museum applied a fifteen year moratorium on all reproductions of the *Étant Donnés*, "by photography or otherwise," with the exception of photographs of the doors once the work was in place.<sup>1132</sup> Yet another fifteen year reproduction ban was placed upon the two notebooks that accompanied the work, though reputable scholars were to be granted access to the books at the museum's discretion.<sup>1133</sup> Finally, while all matters pertaining to publicity were officially left to the "discretion and good judgement" of the

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<sup>1130</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 463.

<sup>1131</sup> Memorandum of Agreement between the Cassandra Foundation and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, clauses 2 and 3, respectively. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1132</sup> Memorandum of Agreement between the Cassandra Foundation and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, clause 5. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1133</sup> Memorandum of Agreement between the Cassandra Foundation and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, clause 6. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

museum,<sup>1134</sup> the three parties concerned had decided to place the work within the gallery without any fanfare, “just as if it had been there all the time.”<sup>1135</sup>

The ban on reproducing images of the work proved to be the least popular of the restrictions, due somewhat to the fact that the rationale behind it was the most difficult to understand. Ostensibly, the restrictions on photographing the work stemmed from Duchamp’s own attempts to take satisfactory photographs of the work. The wooden doors of the *Étant Donnés* were, in fact, constructed so that photographs could easily be taken. The upper right and left hand quadrants are hung from a steel bar so that they can be slid aside and interior photographs taken. Instructions on how to take good colour photographs were even included in the manual of instructions.<sup>1136</sup> Neither Duchamp, nor those involved with the transfer of the piece were fully satisfied with the results he had obtained, as they “hardly suggest the impressive impact of the piece and that they even run the risk of introducing factors that are not appropriate to the quality of the piece.”<sup>1137</sup> As such, it was determined that simply disallowing photographs was the most effective way of ensuring that the effect of the work was not misrepresented.

The collective decision of Teeny, Copley and the PMA was that the only publicly accessible or publishable photograph of the work would be of the external wooden door. While the museum reserved the right to publish photographs of the work’s interior after the set period of fifteen years, they did aver that, “it should, nonetheless, be recognized always that the very vivid experience of seeing the piece initially can never be conveyed in photographs; in fact, as Marcel Duchamp’s own

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<sup>1134</sup> Memorandum of Agreement between the Cassandra Foundation and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, clause 3. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1135</sup> Letter from Barnett Hodes to Evan H. Turner, 26 February 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1136</sup> “*Photos – Pour faire de bonnes photo en couleur, 1° enlever le velours noir qui tapisse la porte par derrière 2° dévisser les 4 attaches [4,5,6,7,] qui tienner ensemble les 4 panneaux de la porte et faire glisser à gauche et à droite les 2 panneaux supérieur seulement sur la grosse barre rond d’acier,*” Duchamp, *Manual of Instructions for Étant Donnés*, n.p., listed under: “5me OP: Le Port.”

<sup>1137</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Barnett Hodes, 19 May 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

photographs have shown, any reproduction tends to create a travesty of the artist's intent."<sup>1138</sup>

This directive was begrudgingly accepted by critics writing about the work, who were instead forced to provide lengthy and detailed descriptions of the complex scene behind the door. The practical upshot of such descriptions, regardless of the tone of the review, was to make the work more mysterious, and therefore more appealing. Regardless of the extent to which the work was written about, the reader could not get even a general idea of the work without going to see it in Philadelphia. As the art critic for the *Chicago Tribune* declared, "People must be drawn to its peepholes. It will not come to them."<sup>1139</sup> Ultimately, the curiosity aroused by the photography ban must be counted as partially responsible for the fact that, in the weeks following the *Étant Donnés*' unveiling, the museum received treble the number of visitors it received at the same time the previous summer.<sup>1140</sup>

A few writers protested the ban on photography, including the art critic for *The New York Times*, John Canaday, who observed that "you are held so rigidly to a single view... that your vision is as static as a camera lens. This is the one completely photographable three dimensional work that I can think of."<sup>1141</sup> Arturo Schwarz also objected to the photography ban on the *Étant Donnés*, though he never criticized it in his writing on the work. Perhaps in protest at not being informed of the work beforehand, Schwarz brought a camera along to the museum on the day the work was unveiled and attempted to take a photograph of the work himself. This first attempt was relatively unsuccessful, and resulted in a grainy close-up of the peep-holes through which the viewer looks.<sup>1142</sup> He managed to take a better quality image a short time later, and published the first photograph of the interior of the *Étant Donnés* in the second edition of *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, which appeared in 1970. While the Philadelphia Museum of Art did not authorize or publish any images

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<sup>1138</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Madame Duchamp and Mr. Copley, 28 January 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. The photographs mentioned could only have been the ones contained within the *Manual of Instructions*.

<sup>1139</sup> Thomas Willis, 'Its an Eyeful, That's for Sure,' *Chicago Tribune*, 5 October 1969, section E, p. 10.

<sup>1140</sup> Patricia Boyd Wilson, 'Duchamp Nude Triples Art Museum Attendance,' p. 11.

<sup>1141</sup> John Canaday, 'Philadelphia Museum Shows Final Duchamp Work,' *The New York Times*, 7 July 1969, p. 30.

<sup>1142</sup> This photograph was used, along with the authorized photograph of the door, to illustrate the catalogue entry for the *Étant Donnés* in the first edition of *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*.

of the interior of the work prior to the agreed upon date in 1984, in effect, the ban ended one year after the work was unveiled.<sup>1143</sup>

A similar misfortune befell the decision to eschew all advance publicity for the work. The original publicity plans of Teeny, Copley and the Museum involved the installation of the *Étant Donnés* with absolutely no advance mention of its existence. Following its unveiling, the work would be the subject of an extended article in the museum bulletin, and two articles in the July 1969 issue of *Art in America*, one of which was to be written by William Copley.<sup>1144</sup> These plans were undermined, however, when *Art in America* unexpectedly issued a release to the New York press announcing their upcoming issue dedicated to Duchamp's life and work.<sup>1145</sup>

The headline of the press release, "Newly Revealed Final Masterpiece by Marcel Duchamp Publicized for First Time by Art in America," was enough to dash any hopes of allowing the work to "creep quietly into its public life."<sup>1146</sup> Moreover, the press release played up the "explicitly sexual" nature of the piece and asserted, incorrectly, that the work would be displayed "to adults only."<sup>1147</sup> Understandably, this garnered a great deal of interest not only from the New York art world, but further afield as well, with requests to view the work coming from the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Post* and *Time Magazine*.<sup>1148</sup>

While there were initial attempts to muckrake amongst local Philadelphia television news, and to a lesser extent local newspapers, these garnered little following and soon died away.<sup>1149</sup> Critical reaction to the work ranged from lukewarm to positive, with the most damning assessment being that the work was "a

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<sup>1143</sup> Conversation between Michael Taylor and the author, July 2005.

<sup>1144</sup> William Copley, 'The New Piece,' *Art in America*, July-August 1969, p. 36. The entire issue was devoted to the life of Marcel Duchamp.

<sup>1145</sup> A copy of the press release is in Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1146</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Madame Duchamp, 26 June 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1147</sup> *Art in America* press release. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1148</sup> Willis, 'Its an Eyeful, That's for Sure,' p. 10. Paul Richard, "Arcane, Impudent, Dignified and Lazy," *Washington Post*, 17 August 1969, 150. Anonymous, 'Peep-Show,' *Time*, July 1969. <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,901003,00.html>> [accessed 24 January 2010].

<sup>1149</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Madame Duchamp, 8 July 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

bit retardataire.”<sup>1150</sup> The public response to the work was more positive, with 12,812 people visiting the museum in the first week that the *Étant Donnés* was on view, and 4,277 of those visitors specifically requesting to see Duchamp’s new work.<sup>1151</sup>

In addition to the high viewing figures for the work, there was also considerably less offence and disapprobation engendered by the work than was expected.<sup>1152</sup> In fact, there were only two letters of complaint sent to the museum expressing outrage at the graphic sexuality of the work and objecting to the museum “playing flack to a fraud.”<sup>1153</sup> Rather more frequent were letters and verbal complaints from visitors who found themselves too short to see through the peep-holes unaided. “The first time it occurred, the lady involved, when she discovered there was no stool provided, proceeded to go to all the ‘phone booths in the Museum and returned carrying four ‘phone books under her arms!”<sup>1154</sup>

### Démontage et Montage

Of all of the particular points of action agreed upon by Teeny, Copley and the PMA, the only one which ultimately was followed was the fifteen year restriction on the publishing of Duchamp’s *Manual of Instructions* for the *Étant Donnés*. The restriction was put into place because it was determined that the instructions “were not done in that spirit. They were done only to direct the montage and démontage.”<sup>1155</sup> Moreover, it was concluded that “the book is completely technical

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<sup>1150</sup> Canaday, ‘Philadelphia Museum Shows Final Duchamp Work,’ p. 30.

<sup>1151</sup> Letter from Evan H Turner to Madame Duchamp, 14 July 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1152</sup> The Philadelphia Museum of Art organized a group of board members and cultural leaders who would be able to respond and defend the *Étant Donnés* in the case of a public backlash against the work and Museum. Letter from Evan H. Turner to William Wood, 3 July 1969. Letter from Evan H. Turner to William Coleman, 7 July 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1153</sup> Letter from Helen S. Marks to Evan Turner, 15 July 1969. Letter from Mr. and Mrs. Donald Gallager to Evan Turner, 15 July 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1154</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Madame Duchamp, 14 July 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1155</sup> Letter from Alexina Duchamp to Arturo Schwarz, 20 March 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

and has none of the more general philosophical observation found in the ‘Green Box,’<sup>1156</sup>

While the book is clearly of a different type than Duchamp’s earlier collections of notes, it provides an equally important insight into both the operations and the meaning behind the *Étant Donnés*, as well as an interesting insight into Duchamp’s own thoughts on the work. The *Manual of Instruction* is every bit as much a practical document as the *Box of 1914*, the *Green Box*, and the contemporaneous *White Box* are esoteric. Unlike these *Boxes*, the *Manual of Instructions* is a rigidly organized text. The *Manual* begins with a breakdown of the fifteen operations involved in correctly assembling the work, with a brief expansion of the details involved in each operation. Following the introduction is a much more extensive explanation of everything involved in completing each of the operations, copiously illustrated with diagrams and annotated photographs of the object or detail discussed. Finally, there is a miniature cardboard model of the installed architectural elements, which provides a non-scale idea of the relationships of the spaces created within the work.

The most apparent aspect of the *Manual of Instructions* is indubitably the degree of meticulousness evident throughout. Within the initial pages of the notebook, Duchamp refers to the *Étant Donnés* as an “*Approximation démontable*,” and elaborates that “(*par approximation j’entends une marge d’ad libitum dans le démontage et montage*).<sup>1157</sup> It soon becomes overwhelmingly clear, however, that there is almost no scope within these instructions for approximation of any kind. These are not generic instructions, but the steps necessary to reconstruct the work exactly as it was in his studio at the time of Duchamp’s death.

While he appears to have harboured some doubt about the future location of the work, it was nonetheless apparent that it would not be able to stay forever in his secret studio. With the implicit knowledge that the *Étant Donnés* would eventually need to be reconstructed by someone else, Duchamp labelled, numbered or colour-

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<sup>1156</sup> Letter from Evan H. Turner to Madame Duchamp and Mr. Copley, 28 January 1969. Box 33 (*Étant Donnés* records), Evan Hopkins Turner Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

<sup>1157</sup> Duchamp, *Manual of Instructions for Étant Donnés*, n.p., strip of paper attached to the first page.



coded, and photographed every element within the work. The only element in the entire work in which the promised margin of *ad libitum* is made available is the placement of the clouds: “- les nuages, *ad lib.*, attachés sur le ciel bleu ou sur le verre dépoli; ils pourront être modifiés dans le réglage définitif (en ouvrant les côtés du paysage.[])”<sup>1158</sup> The remainder of the text abounds with emphatic words such as “*absolu[ment]*,” “*exactement.*” and “*important.*” and an array of other phrases underlined to stress their importance. He even went so far as to specify the measurement of certain angles within the work, specifying that the rear wall should be placed, “*pas tout à vertical (angle obtus de 91° ou 92° avec le plan du lino quadrille[])*” that forms the floor of the construction.

There is no aspect of the *Étant Donnés* into which this specificity does not creep. Arguably, the most striking incidence of this specificity is in Duchamp’s instructions for installing the lighting of the work. (figure 7.26) The diagram illustrates the layout of all of the electrical components of the *Étant Donnés* and explains how they are each attached to the larger structure. In addition to this information, there are also notations on the physical size of the lights, their wattage, the colours and even the brand of each bulb. As this was the only element of the work that was guaranteed to need replacing at some point, it is understandable that more detailed descriptions were necessary. However, the importance Duchamp placed upon maintaining the exact lighting effects he achieved, even after his death, is evidenced by the range of descriptions employed to specify the desired colours. The round bulb illuminating the waterfall is marked “cool white,” while “daylight very white” is indicated for one fluorescent bulb, “white” for a second, and “pinkish” for third.

Unsurprisingly, considering the specificity of technical detail, there is little in the manual by way of explanation or explication of meaning. The language employed throughout the text is largely dry and impersonal, concerned only with communicating how the piece functions, and how it should be reconstructed. Richard Hamilton has drawn similar conclusions regarding the *Boîte Verte*, likening it to “a

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<sup>1158</sup> Ibid., 2me OP (suite).

commentary and a manual, a key, a map and an instruction book.”<sup>1159</sup> What sets the two apart, however, is the inclusion of commentary in the *Boîte Verte*. The *Manual of Instructions* provides little insight into the identity of the figure, her environment, or how the two interact, merely how its visual effects are achieved.

This is not to suggest that the work is not enlightening in other ways. While the *Manual of Instructions* does not provide answers regarding the meaning or intent of the *Étant Donnés*, it speaks volumes about Duchamp’s own relationship with the work. The absolute meticulousness of his instructions leaves little doubt as to the care and concern he lavished over this work, or to the standard to which he held his own creation of the work. His insistence upon the minimum space for *ad libitum* indicates not only a demanded specificity on the part of the individual charged with reconstructing it, but also that at the time of his death Duchamp believed her current specifications were definitive. Thus, while the question of whether or not the *Étant Donnés* was to go to Philadelphia was important, far more important was the assurance that it would be assembled at its final destination precisely as if he had done it himself.

The planning and precision present throughout the *Manual of Instructions* similarly confirms that the lack of commentary therein is in no way accidental. Having kept the work a secret for twenty-two years at the time of his death, Duchamp had planned amply for its posthumous discovery. He had made arrangements for the financial and physical future of the *Étant Donnés*, but had chosen not to offer clarification. Rather, he chose to leave the work a mystery, in one sense a practical joke in which Duchamp always gets the last laugh.

It is this desire to have the last laugh that is amongst the most important features of the *Étant Donnés*, for in its humour as in its construction Duchamp remains in control. It is hard to deny that the conditions of experiencing the work are as pervasively controlling, and maintain the same degree of specificity as the *Manual of Instructions*. The work can only be viewed by one person at a time. Despite the apparent intimacy of such a viewing experience, it is simultaneously clinical. The

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<sup>1159</sup> Richard Hamilton, ‘The Bride Stripped Bare by Richard Hamilton, Even,’ *Tate*, p. 58.

individual experience of each spectator, their “personal ‘art coefficient’” to use Duchamp’s own clinical phrase,<sup>1160</sup> will undoubtedly differ. Nonetheless, the physical experience of the work is identical each and every time. The scene within is static and preserved, and the very vantage point of each spectator is identical to that of all who have come before.

These elements of control, which suffuse all aspects of the *Étant Donnés*, are by no means haphazard. The specificity and lack of commentary ensures the preservation of the questions inherent in the experience of the *Étant Donnés*. As is implied by the title, the spectator is limited in what he or she is given, both by the work, and through Duchamp’s lack of commentary. This ensures that the experience of the work is individual and controlled, and most importantly, that it lacks a definitive solution. With each new viewer, the same questions are raised but as the experience of the work cannot be shared, they cannot be answered. This mutability of meaning ensures that the *Étant Donnés*, and by extension Duchamp, are eternally returned to, and that the legacy of Marcel Duchamp remains “definitively unfinished.”

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<sup>1160</sup> Duchamp, ‘The Creative Act’; in *Marchand du Sel*, ed. by Sanouillet and Peterson, p. 138.

“It’s curious how I get an impression when I look at paintings of yours from the point of view of their chronological sequence of the successive moves in a game of chess.”<sup>1161</sup>

Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp,  
14 July 1951

“Your comparison between the chronological order of the paintings and a game of chess is absolutely right... but when will I administer check mate? or will I be mated?”<sup>1162</sup>

Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arensberg,  
22 July 1951

### Conclusion

Duchamp’s attempts to control the perception of himself and his work were lifelong and subtle. Much as if he were playing a game of chess, Duchamp had defined his objective at an early stage, identified potential weaknesses in his own position, anticipated possible pitfalls and pursued the surest route to his goal. For Duchamp this goal was simple and direct. What Duchamp desired was to secure a place for himself in the pantheon of art history.

The opening gambit in Duchamp’s chess game took the form of a two-pronged attack. Offensively, he sought to maximize the publicity surrounding the *succès de scandale* of his *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*. By encouraging and participating in the dialogue around this work, Duchamp remained in the public eye and entrenched himself within American popular visual culture. Simultaneously,

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<sup>1161</sup> Letter from Walter Arensberg to Marcel Duchamp, 14 July 1951. Box 6, Folder 35, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

<sup>1162</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Arensberg, 22 July 1951. Box 6, Folder 35, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives. Reprinted in *Affectionately, Marcel*, ed. by Naumann and Obalk, no. 200, p. 303.

Duchamp's defensive strategy entailed insulating the remainder of his developing oeuvre from the effects of the volatile and unpredictable commercial marketplace. Through his friendship with and patronage by the Arensbergs and Katherine Dreier, Duchamp managed to guarantee for himself a steady market for his work without needing to capitulate to market demands. As in any game of chess, the objective of the opening game is to position the exchange in such a way as to be in a more comfortable position than one's opponent. For Duchamp, this entailed maintaining as much control as possible over his public persona.

As with any good opening, Duchamp not only sought to gain the initial advantage, but also to lay the groundwork for future development of his strategy. Thus, Duchamp's middle game entailed shoring up the position of power he had carved out during his early career. He worked to bolster the collections of his patrons, adding not only more of his own work, but strengthening the strategic position of each collection with additions of work by other prominent artists. The transitional nature of the middle game further involves the marshalling of one's position in preparation for the final attack. This too can be seen in Duchamp's consolidation of his oeuvre in the *Boîte-en-Valise*, laying the foundation for his claims of an almost sacred unity to his body of work.

Even as he strove to shore up the security and desirability of the collections in which his oeuvre was housed, Duchamp continued to develop his relationship with both the popular and specialist press. In this period Duchamp began to create an almost super-human public persona for himself. Though willingly acknowledging literary and philosophical influences on his work, he strove to disassociate himself from any perceived artistic influence, casting himself as the purest of innovators, effectively self-originating.

Within the context of chess, the middle and endgames merge one into the other; a slippage that also finds reflection in Duchamp's actions. The preparatory action of undercutting any ascribed influences in this development of his work placed Duchamp in the ideal position to maximize his association with younger *avant-garde* artists. Having cast himself as capable of innovation without the necessity of forebears, he could still not be meaningfully considered an innovator until the seeds of

his efforts bore fruit. Thus, his insistence on the primacy of his innovations enabled him to be cast as “Dada’s Daddy”<sup>1163</sup> and “Pop’s Dada;”<sup>1164</sup> a progenitor rather than another link in a chain of influence.

Similarly seamless in the transition from middle to endgame was Duchamp’s work towards the permanent disposition of his oeuvre. As Duchamp was gathering his life’s work in miniature within the *Boîte-en-Valise*, so too was he in the earliest stages of both the Arensbergs’ and Katherine Dreier’s negotiations with a variety of institutions. The creation of the *Boîte* not only enabled Duchamp to round out the Arensbergs’ collection, it also prefigured Duchamp’s most significant move towards securing a place in the history of art; his role in the dispersal of his patrons’ collections. Completing the chain of events anticipated by his opening salvo, Duchamp’s participation in the dispersal negotiations for both the Arensberg and Dreier collections brought his goal tantalizingly close. So decisive was this move toward his goal of art historical acclaim that it effectively constituted the checking, if not mating, of his objective.

Though Duchamp had achieved the fundamental ingredient for appreciation by posterity, preservation, he remained keenly aware that the game was not over and he could still be forgotten. Duchamp continued to shore up his art historical legacy, bolstering his reputation and art historical relevance through participation in large scale retrospectives of his work in Pasadena and London. Through these exhibitions, as well as through interviews and collaborations, Duchamp continued to promote both his innovation and continued relevance to the artists of the *avant-garde*.

Duchamp’s goal of appreciation by posterity was, by its very nature one that was not only impossible to objectively measure, but impossible to achieve during his lifetime. Thus, if his goal was to be achieved, and the checkmate delivered, it would have to be done posthumously, a checking and mating of posterity. The posthumous unveiling of the *Étant Donnés*, achieved this goal. For the two decades during which Duchamp worked on the phenomenally intricate and involved work it remained a secret to all but the smallest and most trusted group of Duchamp’s allies. The

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<sup>1163</sup> Winthrop Sargeant, ‘Dada’s Daddy,’ *Life*, 32 (28 April 1952), pp. 100-106, 108, 111.

<sup>1164</sup> Anonymous, ‘Pop’s Dada,’ *Time*, 5 February 1965, pp. 78, 85.

completeness of this secrecy allowed Duchamp to administer the check mate, catching his opponents unaware and, as far as possible, ensuring shock and debate far into the future.

There is no evidence that Duchamp consciously approached his career as being akin to a game of chess, or even intentionally applied strategies from his chess career to his pursuit of art historical preservation. The structural parallels that exist between the two, nonetheless, highlight important elements of careerism within Duchamp's behaviour. Possibly chief among these revelations is the dogged persistence with which Duchamp pursued his goal. As is evinced throughout both his statements and his actions, it is indubitable that Duchamp deeply desired the immortality provided by the reverence of posterity. Almost equally intriguing however, in light of the dilettantism that he worked to project, was that this necessarily long-term goal was pursued without falter throughout the course of his life.

Further evident in both Duchamp's dogged pursuit and successful attainment of these goals is the level of perspicacity and sagacity required to bring his goal to fruition. The variety of arenas within the art world in which Duchamp worked to shore up his place in posterity indicates that he possessed a thorough understanding of the ways in which public perception is created and shaped. The thoroughness of that understanding is further evinced in Duchamp's conscious efforts to avoid certain of the intermediary entities within the art world, including dealers and galleries, while colluding with others, most notably museums and collectors. His practical preference for those entities that shape our understanding of art history over those tied to a contemporary market is extremely significant. It not only underscores the nature of his long term career goal, but it shows that he was keenly aware of the way in which art is preserved and passed on to future generations. Though by his own admission he believed them akin to mausolea,<sup>1165</sup> Duchamp's preferred associations were with that end of the art world spectrum focused on preservation and traditionally disinclined toward change.

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<sup>1165</sup> Krasne, 'A Marcel Duchamp Profile,' p. 24.

The practice of avoiding of certain entities and institutions, while courting others was not the extent of Duchamp's insight into the operations of the mediating bodies within the art world. In addition to the structural parallels with chess strategy outlined above, there is evidence throughout Duchamp's career of deft strategic planning in his dealings with these various entities. Constantly conscious of future potentialities, Duchamp worked to dissipate or negate the effects of possible future occurrences; effectively attempting to remain at least one step ahead of the unfolding of events. While Duchamp undoubtedly trusted both Dreier and the Arensbergs, the possibility that they would not include him in the disposition of their collections nonetheless weighed heavily upon him. This concern is evident in the fact that Duchamp codified his legal stake by officially becoming a trustee of each collection; thus ensuring that neither collection could be legally disposed of without his consent.

Similarly, Duchamp was keenly aware that the placement of the Arensbergs' collection with the Philadelphia Museum of Art did not guarantee the display of his work in perpetuity. It is as a precaution against this eventuality that Duchamp's insisted upon having the *Large Glass* cemented three feet into the gallery floor; it ensured the central positioning of his masterpiece and prevented against any potential change in display. This same awareness of possible changes in the museum's attitude motivated Duchamp's curatorial participation in the retrospectives held during his lifetime, as well as the posthumous unveiling of *Étant Donnés*. All of which were done in order to ensure both the continuous display and continual reconsideration of Duchamp's work required for the posthumous acclaim he so desired. So thoroughgoing is the evidence of strategic manipulation within Duchamp's career, that the credit he is so readily given as a subtle and skilful strategist in his approach to chess can be equally well applied to his pursuit of art historical immortality.

Duchamp's career, the acclaim and genius that have been accorded to him, were by no means the product of his much vaunted chance; his career was not something that merely happened to him. Rather, Duchamp was an active participant in both his own career, and the solidification of his legacy. Unlike the laconic dilettante that he took such pains to project, Duchamp was a far more complex figure than has yet been fully understood.



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Katherine Derier Papers/Société Anonymé Archive (YCAL MSS 101)  
Box 12/Folder 307-326 (Correspondence with Marcel Duchamp)  
Box 2/Folder 55, 56 (Correspondence with the Arensbergs)  
Box 4/Folder 105, 106 (Correspondence with Alfred Barr)  
Box 12/Folder 316, 327 (Correspondence with Suzanne & Lucie Duchamp)  
Box 26/Folder 738 (Correspondence with MoMA)  
Box 28/Folder 806 (Correspondence with Walter Pach)  
Box 35/Folder 1048 (Correspondence with Jacques Villon)  
Box 39/Folder 1125, 1126 (Correspondence with YUAG)  
Box 40/Folder 1146 (Correspondence with Yale University)  
Box 41/Folder 1181-1183, 1194, 1220 (3<sup>rd</sup> Party correspondence involving Duchamp)  
Box 60/Folder 1626, 1636 (*Large Glass* repair & Country Museum Plan)  
Box 93/Folder 2368-2370, 2373 (Transfer of SA collection to Yale)  
Box 101/Folder 2493, 2497 (Subject files on Société Anonyme artists)

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